IS IT POSSIBLE TO MAKE THE BEST OF BOTH WORLDS?

BY T. BINNEY.

A New Edition.

LONDON:
JAMES NISBET AND CO., BERNERS-STREET;
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1854.

ONE SHILLING AND SIXPENCE.

Mrs H. Ben Oliel.
with love from her
affectionate Brother
James [illegible]

27th Decr 1853.

IS IT POSSIBLE TO MAKE THE BEST OF BOTH WORLDS?

A Book for Young Men.

BY T. BINNEY,

"You must, some day or other, bring your thoughts . . . into the form of a little treatise on the ethics of common life, and the ways and means of ordinary happiness."—HORNER *to* JEFFREY.

"THE CHAPTER OF ACCIDENTS IS THE BIBLE OF THE FOOL."—"*The Times.*"

Sixth Edition.

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ADVERTISEMENT

TO THE SECOND EDITION.

The Lecture, which is here expanded into a volume, was delivered on the evening of the 10th of February, 1852, in Exeter Hall, before the Members of the London Young Men's Christian Association; Sir Edward N. Buxton, Bart., in the chair. Owing to a sudden attack of illness, the Author was unable to publish it with the series of Lectures, of which it was the last. He pledged himself, however, to prepare it for publication as soon as he was able; but many months passed before this could be attempted. When, at last, he began to write, he found himself insensibly enlarging his plan; and he felt he could, with propriety, do this, for as the piece was to be a separate publication, he was not confined to those limits which would have

been imposed by its appearing as one Lecture in a series of twelve. It has thus, without anything like premeditated purpose, become a book. Begun, however, as a lecture, the idea of a spoken address is kept up, which will account to the reader for the homeliness of some of the illustrations, and for the constant use of free and familiar forms of speech. In the preface to the first edition, there was given to the young men,—whose patience had been greatly taxed,—a minute explanation of the causes of delay in the appearance of the work. Having served its purpose, it is thought to be as unnecessary now to repeat this statement, as it was expedient to make it once. The Author has, therefore, nothing to add, but to express his gratitude for the kindness with which his little Work has been received, and the rapidity with which a large impression has been taken off; and to commend this new and improved Edition to the gracious blessing of Almighty God.

Walworth, March, 1853.

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IS IT POSSIBLE TO MAKE THE BEST OF BOTH WORLDS?

PART I.

INTRODUCTORY EXPLANATIONS.

THE subject which I have undertaken to discuss this evening, is thus stated,—IS IT POSSIBLE TO MAKE THE BEST OF BOTH WORLDS? This form of expression, you will observe, assumes two things. It assumes that there are two worlds—the present and the future; and that there are two ways of getting through each—a better and a worse. On these assumptions the question is raised. Admitting them, then, some one is supposed to ask—Whether it be possible for any one man, or for men in general, to make the best of *both* worlds—or of this life, and of the next too? I am to meet and to endeavour to reply to this inquiry.

With respect to what is *assumed* by the question, it may be observed, that in each of the two pairs of suppositions, there is a matter of fact and a matter of opinion. It is a *fact* that we live; it is the *opinion*

of many that we shall live again. It is a *fact* that the present life is a very different thing to different individuals; it is the *opinion* of most who anticipate another, that *it*, too, will be distinguished in the same way. You may add to this, that it is very generally thought that man's *second* state will be his last,—that it will be endless, fixed, and unalterable,—that it will be the best or the worst, which it is possible for our nature to enjoy or to endure;—and that it will follow *as a consequence* from what we do and are in the present world.

All these things I call, at starting, matters of opinion. Such, whether right or wrong, is the popular hypothesis respecting the relation of man to futurity. At present, it is enough to say, that this hypothesis *may* be true. A man may deny, but he cannot disprove it. He can oppose a negative, to a positive, form of belief;—he can meet your "yes,"—the "yes" rather of universal humanity, with his "no;" but he can do nothing more. After all that he can advance in behalf of the probability of his own theory, he will yet have to admit, that the system of things, as it works itself out, *may* substantiate the hypothesis of belief, and repudiate and falsify that of denial.

Seeing then, that we actually are, as a matter of fact, in one world, and that we may possibly, some day, be in another; and seeing, moreover, that there are two ways, a better and a worse, of getting through the present, and that it *may* be that this

same law shall go with us into the next;—on these grounds, it must, I think, be admitted, that the proposed inquiry is one of deep interest, and that it has claims upon the attention of us all, which are not to be lightly set aside.

But I want it to be noticed, that the subject *especially addresses itself to young men.* If it be possible to make the best of "both" worlds, it is not only important to know it, and to be put on the right track, but it is important to remember that this can only be done while "both" worlds are yet *before* us. The old have the first lying behind them. Whatever they may have made of it, that is now unalterable. It may have looked once "as the garden of Eden," it may be now "as a desolate wilderness;" but whatever it is, it is gone and done with, and the *fact* as it stands will be a fact for ever! Even with respect to the middle-aged, the probability is, that they have taken steps which cannot be retraced, or have been drifted into positions from which there is no retreat. If they have failed to take advantage of time and opportunity, time and opportunity are with them at an end. Their chance is lost,—or such chance as they once had. The flowing tide that floated others, and might have floated *them,* will rise no more. They cannot do what they once might have done, and must be content now to continue where they are. But to THE YOUNG, life is yet fresh and new,—in *their* hands it is plastic and pliable. They have the

experiment of living yet to begin; and they are interested, *as none besides can be*, in learning how to begin it well. After having utterly failed in the experiment,—after having spoiled and poisoned life,—after having abused and made the worst of the world that now is,—if it still be possible to secure the next, and, by some means or other, to make the best of *it*, by all means let it be done, and let the old, the vicious, and the miserable—the sinner and the fool, repair their errors as well as they can. It must be better, however,—if *that* be possible—to make the best of *this* life as well as the next, to spoil neither, but to make the happiness of the one prophetic of and preliminary to that of the other. *If* this can be done, it must be well to do it. But it is only the young that *can* do it, or that can be practically taught to do it, if it has not been already secured. As to one world, at least, the chances of others may be worth nothing. The young only have the materials in their hands, and the opportunity accorded them, of attempting to make the best of both. To *them*, therefore, the question before us has an interest and a significancy all their own.

Pardon me for adding, still further, that, while the subject is thus evinced to come with peculiar emphasis to *you*, I feel the discussion of it to be a matter of solemn responsibility to myself. If I can so speak, as well and wisely to set forth the course and articulations of our great argument, and to carry with me your reason and conscience; if I

can move and agitate for good, this immense mass of young, active, advancing mind—advancing, as we believe, into *two* worlds,—if I can succeed in convincing you of the possibility of securing the advantages of both, and in rousing you to the determination of attempting to secure them;—who can tell what may be the result of this evening's engagement, not only to you, but to society and the world? By God's blessing,—without which nothing can be successful,—some of you may be confirmed in all that is good, others arrested and restrained from evil, and thus, so far, much may be done in promoting private happiness and individual virtue; —so far, too, would something be done towards increasing the sum of that social influence, which in each generation insensibly operates on all sides, and which, once created, goes on in its results, to other generations and throughout all time. It is something to succeed in inducing *any* to determine on the pursuit and culture of goodness, and to help them to do so as they quietly proceed along the unnoticed and ordinary walks of life; but among the hundreds and thousands assembled here, there may be some souls of strong powers and great capacity,—born to inspire, to lead, and to command,—and if but one such could, so to speak, be fused and fixed by the subject of the evening, a force might be put into motion and activity the effects of which it is impossible to calculate. A strong, determined, large-hearted man, impelled, from this time forth, to secure

to himself the advantages and blessings of which we have to speak, would not only do so, but would become the originator in other souls—it might be the world over, and to distant times—of a purpose, and a life similar to his own! It is worth an effort, on my part, to endeavour to secure any one of these possible results. I will not say what is requisite on yours, for I am quite certain that I shall have that sympathy and indulgence, which will both help me in making the effort, and concur in securing its success.

II.

"Is it possible to make the best of both worlds?"—I have already explained that this question assumes the *facts* of the present world, and of the different ways of getting through it;—the *belief* of another, and of its probable existence under a similar law. Of course, there is no question about the palpable reality of the world we live in. Here we are, on a tolerably solid standing-place;—the verdant earth and the swelling ocean spreading around us on all sides;—the glorious heaven, with its light and darkness, its sun and stars, its moving clouds, and its fixed, blue, immeasurable arch, over our heads! We know, too, that there are towns, and cities, and multitudes of people; trade and commerce, ships and counting-houses, farms and vineyards, mills and manufactories;—skilled artificers, navvies, statesmen; learned colleges, village schoolmasters, cultivators of the

land, labourers at the docks,—men, "whose talk is about bullocks," and men who can enjoy the sublimities of song, and foretel the coming of an eclipse! There is society with its ranks, and industry with its rewards; there are toil, and sweat, and sore travail,—ease, affluence, elegance, and beauty. There are authors and soldiers, thrones and gibbets, palaces and gaols;—there are books and paintings, tents and pyramids, ecclesiastical courts, railway kings, and transportation to Norfolk Island. There are old cathedrals and new parliaments; public processions, city feasts, rural games, Greek slaves, American independence, "the north star," love and marriage, births and baptisms, sickness and death! There are all sorts and varieties of fortune,—all imaginable vicissitudes of circumstance—and all forms and gradations of character, from the man clothed with the cardinal virtues, to the rascal that hasn't a rag of reputation! There is no doubt about all this, and ten thousand times more. There it is. The whole thing is lying before us,—lying, in this very London of ours, with all the reality that a solid, round world can give to it, and with all the distinctness and colour of a map. And not only so,—not only are the world and life great facts, but, to those who know how to look at them, the strange, mixed, variable phenomena which they present,—the dissolving views that so rapidly succeed each other,—every occurrence, from the most general and comprehensive to the most minute and individual,—all appear to be

determined and regulated by certain fixed, changeless, ever-operating, and, to a great extent, *ascertainable* laws. These laws may seem at times to be interrupted or suspended—to be violated, contradicted, superseded,—but never in reality do they cease to act. Whether men choose to care for them or not, they take care of themselves. They go on working away, influencing and moulding thing and person, fortune and character; grinding out their results, sometimes to the surprise and astonishment of observers, but generally with as much perceptible equity and perfect naturalness as certainty and precision.

Now, in looking at all this, we cannot but see, as a simple, plain matter of fact, that some people do actually make a good thing of the present world, and that some don't. With the first, life is bright, joyous, successful, happy. They contrive to work up its raw material into something noble, beautiful, and good. With the second it is otherwise:—in their hands, life becomes a bitterness and a burden; it puts on the appearance of a repulsive deformity; the whole thing is a miserable failure; they blunder on—get wrecked and lost—worry themselves, wear out their friends, and then "wish they had never been born!" These things, too, are obvious and every-day matters of fact. There they are. There's no denying them. It is as plain as that there is a real visible world, that there are two ways of getting through it. The question before us, then, you will observe, is not whether it be possible to make the

best of *this* life,—or at least to make a tolerably or thorough good thing of it,—for that is admitted and acknowledged as a preliminary fact,—but whether it is possible to do this, *and*, at the same time, to secure the blessings and advantages of the next? Can we now act on any principle, which, while it provides for the use and enjoyment of the one world, will provide for and secure the happiness of the other?

On the theory of two worlds, many suppositions and possibilities are conceivable. It is supposed, for instance, that it is possible to make *the worst* of *both*;—to go through present to future wretchedness,—turning this life into a preliminary hell. Then, again, it is supposed to be possible to make the worst of this *by folly and sin*,—to destroy and waste it,—and yet, by God's mercy, to gain a favourable footing in the next;—to "lay hold" of "eternal life," and to secure that it shall be spent after an improved model. It is supposed to be possible to make the worst of this *by heroic virtue*;—willingly to lose it, to spurn, and sacrifice, and throw it away, and count it as nothing, in loyal service of the true and the right; and, while doing this,—making the worst of the present world,—to be securing and making the best of the next,—the one being the price for the other, or being willingly and cheerfully given up for the sake of it. It is thought to be possible to make the best of this (or to appear to do so),—to secure and multiply its varied satisfactions,—to enjoy it in all its resources and

extent, but to do this in such a way that the next life is the price of the pleasure,—the future being thus sacrificed to the present. All these alternatives are supposed to be possible. But the question with us is, whether there is not another supposition, another possibility; whether, in fact, it is absolutely necessary for either one world or the other to be sacrificed; or, whether it may not be possible to make the best of both? Nay, I know not but that I should even be willing to put it thus:—whether the life that now is, might not be so taken hold of in its raw material, and worked up and woven in such a manner, as to become a resplendent and beautiful thing, simply as a present temporary possession,—the man feeling it a joy to have been born, though there should be no second birth for him into a higher state;—whether, moreover, this might not be accomplished on such a principle, that, supposing there should *be* a second state, the advantages and happiness of that state should be secured and prepared for too?

That is the question. I mean to give to it, on the whole, an affirmative reply. I believe, in fact, that the constitution of things is such,—that man's nature is so wonderful, that the world and life are such beautiful and glorious things, and that the tendency of the laws under which we live is so thoroughly on our side—if we only place and keep ourselves in harmony with them—that, even if there were no second world, it is worth a great deal to be

born into this. If there were really no God over him, no heaven above or eternity in prospect, things are so constituted, that man may deem it a most fortunate accident that he lives at all. He may turn the materials of his little life-poem, if not always into a grand epic, mostly into something of interest and beauty; and it is worth his doing so, even if there should be no sequel to the piece. I believe, however, that there will be one;—and I venture to think, that if set about rightly, *both* parts of the performance might be expressed in sustained and harmonious verse. For the successful issue of the experiment of living, either on the hypothesis of the present being your all, or on that of an approaching and anticipated futurity, and your consequent acting with a view to *it*,—in either case, I mean to inculcate what we understand by virtue—I mean to show, or to attempt to show, that this is the great instrument for making the best—either of this world—of the other—or of both.

III.

Here, however, I must stop to listen to two objections which these statements I find have called forth from opposite quarters. I can distinguish voices, —the voices, I think, of Folly and Philosophy, who are alike eager to be immediately heard, each anxious to put in a demurrer that may possibly quash the inquiry at the outset, and put an end to the argument altogether. Make way, then, for the philosopher

and the fool. Let them each have opportunity and freedom of speech. *Silence* in the court! Stand forth, gentlemen;—whichever of you will may speak first. The fool has it. Be it so. The philosopher is pushed aside by his clamorous associate, though he gives way with a good-natured smile of conscious superiority. We must listen, first, then, it seems, to this "learned Theban." Very well. Now, Sir,—say on.

"Why, I mean to say, that if there is any likelihood of there being no world but this,—no God, and no eternity; if there is no immortal soul in man,—nothing, therefore, to be afraid of in any coming hereafter; if *that's* the case, and I have to shape my life on that supposition;—or, if I am asked what I should do on the hypothesis of its *being* the case;—no devil! no hell! death the limit of all life, the world full of its pleasures and delights, and the grave at the end of it as a quiet resting-place, never to be disturbed by dream or awaking: if *that's* it,—my answer is ready:—Let us gather and crush the grape of enjoyment; let us seize on the means of immediate satisfaction; let us eat, and drink, and withhold not our senses from any joy! Garlands and wine, women and songs, wreaths and caresses,—that's the way;—there can be nothing better or wiser than this. To-day is ours, to-morrow we die. A deep hole, six feet by two, is all that will remain to us in a little time. There is nothing beneath,—nothing beyond it. On the further side is an infinite vacuity, within it an eternal sleep; but here, at present, is the breath-

ing earth, the bright world, and health and youth, and cups and coronals! Let us live then while we live. There is nothing to be afraid of. Crime, even, is a trifle if undiscovered; sin is impossible; and—pleasure is pleasant. That's my creed. To enjoy is my maxim. If this life were all, I should make my practice correspond with my belief."

I have no doubt you would; and I dare say you *do*, even now, though you are disturbed by uncomfortable apprehensions of the future. It is very foolish, however, to talk thus. Supposing that this life is your all, why should you throw it away? If there is no second world, that's no reason for not trying to make the best of the present. Supposing the future to be a dream, this life is real enough—*it* is no dream. Here we are, with nature and society as existing facts;—with our own mental and moral capacities, as facts;—with a system of law in which we live and move, as a great fact,—binding together actions and their results, indissolubly uniting sowing and reaping: here is the entire phenomena of life, with its battles and victories, glory and disgrace, all lying before and around us as positive facts,—all, *as such*, just what they are, and what they will be, whether there is a God or not, whether there is an eternity or not, or a heaven and hell or not. There they are. We are capable of observing them,—of watching, weighing, comparing, appreciating. Why not take them as we find them? Why not use them according to their respective properties and our own power

over them?—working up the *potentialities* of life into something great, something which we *know*, from facts under our eye, can be noble in itself, and pregnant with happy issues, while the very toil of producing it may, to the honest worker, be a satisfaction and a joy. Why not act thus, instead of plunging into the pursuit of mere physical indulgence; which will probably bring upon you premature decay and finish you off in a few years? It is *not* "to make the best of life" to do *this*. Whether there is a God or not, does not affect the thing as a matter of fact. Your proposed course, on *any* hypothesis, will work out for you misery and remorse. I repeat the word—*remorse*. Your *moral* nature is one of the facts among existing things. Wherever it came from—whether there was a Divine, intelligent Creator to give it you, or not,—*there it is;* it is a great reality, and is not to be got rid of by the adoption of any set of opinions. Nay, if there really *be* no God and no eternity, still the sense and perception of the right and the good, the praiseworthy and the true, are not the less actually existing facts within you; vice will not the less violate the laws of your constitution, nor the less be followed by appropriate results. Even if it should be otherwise,—if you became "past feeling," and had your conscience seared as with a "red-hot iron," yet your proposed and enunciated plan of life would sap and undermine your physical strength, ruin your character, involve you in poverty, and bring you to an early and dishonoured grave! Now, *why*

should you do this? Why trample on your own nature, violate its laws, waste and destroy it, and make the very worst of the world and life, instead of taking them and using them as a reasonable being, and making them something worthy of a man? If this life is all, you have the greater reason for making the most of it. If there be no hereafter, there is sufficient reality about the world we live in and the life we have, and sufficient possibility of turning them to a high and noble purpose, to prevent you from preferring the life of brutes. If one world only is ours, and that the present,—strange and dislocated as it is, in some of its aspects, it is yet too solid and valuable, in its capabilities, for a wise man to throw it thoughtlessly away. You have spoken like anything but that. After what you have said, I should think the most appropriate thing you could do would be, to take a broad band of paper or parchment,—paint upon it, in a good large size, the four letters *f*, double *o*, *l*,—put it round your hat,—walk out of the Hall,—go along the Strand and down Fleet Street,—and, in the language of Solomon, "proclaim to every one what you are." *We*, who have listened to you, don't need the information.

We have now to listen to the philosopher. Let us do so respectfully. Will you favour us with what *you* have to object?

"I have this to object;—*this*, Sir,—a very different thing from the poor conceit of the miserable dreamer you had just disposed of;—I have to ask,

Sir, if you are really going to teach these young men to be good and virtuous *for what they can get by it?*—to commence the fabric of a high and noble life by laying as the foundation the most mean and selfish of all motives? I seemed to gather as much from your closing remark, in which you spoke of inculcating 'virtue' with a view to the successful issue of the experiment of living,—purposing to show, or to attempt to show, that it is the great instrument for making the best either of one world or the other. What! do you seriously intend to reduce conduct—character and morals, patriotism and philanthropy, truth and righteousness, all that is solid or ornamental in man—do you intend to reduce them to a miserable calculation of what they will bring, either in this world or the next? Are we never to be anything but huxters and chapmen? Is goodness itself to be offered for sale? Are we always to have an eye to the main chance,—ever revolving the sublime subject of profit and loss? Are sentiment and affection, great deeds and loving thoughts,—the very love of your country, your wife or your mother,—are these things and all like them to be continually treated as a good investment;—something that may possibly bear tolerable interest? Are we to be everlastingly scheming for comfort;—puling and pining to be made happy;—putting things together, balancing, weighing, and guessing at results, and choosing what offers the best security? Is virtue to be a bargain?—heaven itself a thing to be bought? Have

you really nothing to appeal to but self-interest? —nothing to set before us but 'the naughty corner' or the slice of gingerbread? Is that all? Are we a set of children? Is there to be nothing noble, nothing disinterested in human life?—nothing heroic, high-minded, self-sacrificing? Is all its greatness to be repressed—all its poetry ignored—all its sublimity and beauty to evaporate—nothing to be left to us but the poor, despicable, drivelling prose of the counter and the shop,—the principle of doing the best we can for ourselves? I scorn, Sir, to reduce virtue to expediency;—the true and the right to the safe and the profitable. That might do for the last generation;—it may do for modern Paleys and Benthams:—it may suit well enough with priestcraft or politics, but it will not do for me, nor for any one, now-a-days, claiming to be worthy the name of a philosopher. I, Sir,—why I am virtuous from necessity;—from perceiving the inherent excellence of goodness;—from feeling the attractions and obligations of duty. Duty *as* duty,—standing before me, pointing the way, whispering the word, —*that* is quite enough. I ask no questions. I make no bargain. I want no wages. I care nothing about results. I don't think about such things. I have nothing to do with them. It is no consequence to me whether I am happy or not, either in this world or another. It is for me to be right. *I* care for that—my happiness must take care of itself. If it does not, I really cannot help it. As I have no

eye to rewards, so am I ready to risk everything in time and eternity. I follow virtue for its own sake, and would choose to be virtuous, and to do virtuously, even if I knew I had to go to hell for it."

Gently, my good friend, gently. You are getting excited, and are hardly perhaps sufficiently weighing your words. For a philosopher, indeed, your enthusiasm is remarkable; your haste and precipitancy—not so much so. To your objection, I shall content myself at present with but a brief reply. On the main point I can put you at your ease at once. I can honestly assure you, that I have a much higher idea of human nature, a higher idea too of the nature of virtue, of the nature and source of moral obligation, than to reduce all inquiries in relation to conduct to the interested calculations of selfishness and expediency. Wait awhile, and perhaps you will find that we shall so put and expound our argument as to render your objection and demurrer inapplicable. In the meantime, suffer me to suggest to you the following things.

In the first place;—without at all being virtuous for the sake of its good and happy results, if it happen to be a fact, in the nature of things, that such good and happy results do actually flow from virtue,—don't you think that *that fact* might be recognised, simply as such,—and that we might reason upon it, and even appeal to men on the ground of it, without at all reducing the theory or damaging the interests of virtue? In the second place;—while it is to be

admitted that there are undoubtedly occasions when severe exactions are made on principle,—when heroic self-sacrifice is demanded by duty,—when a penalty, in fact, would seem to be incurred by adherence to the right,—the entire glory and happiness of life have to be given up, the world renounced and made the worst of (or at least made nothing of);—while, I say, it is to be admitted that such occasions certainly occur, is it not also to be admitted that they are comparatively rare?—that they belong to very special periods in the history of the race, and come with their commands and obligations on something like a chosen or elect few?—Nay, while it is further admitted, that the *principle* which prompts to this moral heroism should lie at the root of *all* virtue, everywhere, and always, and that in every man it ought to be ready, should occasion require, to come forth and embody itself in becoming and congruous speech or achievement; is it not also to be admitted, that this might be, or that it may be,—that is, that the presence of the principle may be *actually* existing in all virtuous men,—and yet that the usual course of things is such, that, in general, great sacrifices and predominating suffering are what is *exceptional*, and that, in spite of men being ready, as a matter of fact, to suffer and to die for virtue, it does so happen that things go well with the virtuous, and better on the whole with them than with others? But in the last place;—admitting the principle that happiness is not to be thought of as the aim of life,

nor the desire of it made the motive to virtue; that expediency and calculation are to give place to the simple and august idea of duty; still, don't you think that a prudential regard to results,—self-preservation, the thought of our own future well-being, the desire of happiness, in fact, as related to all the capacities of our nature, and to the whole extent, or probable extent, of our existence,—don't you think that this, though not *the* motive—the regal and predominating motive to action, may be one of the motives?—may it not be fairly allowed and justified?—may not the subjects that originate or nourish it, have their place among the things to be considered, weighed, and taken into account in the conduct of life? It may look all very well, and sound grand, noble, and eloquent, to talk about being virtuous even if you have to suffer for it for ever; but you *know*, I suppose, that it *cannot be thought* that this can be the case? From what we understand of "the system of nature" even, it can hardly be imagined that it is so constituted as to require from man, because of his harmony with its highest ends, the deliberate sacrifice or voluntary risk of his entire well-being. From what we believe of the "ever-blessed," or "ever-happy" God, we cannot conceive that He should make it the condition of loyalty to Himself, that we should be willing to be damned as the reward of obedience!—willing to give up all thoughts of our personal happiness to such an extent as to include the loss of it both here and hereafter—the

sacrifices of the present, and the sufferings of a future life! The thing is absurd. It cannot be entertained, and ought not to be talked of as if it could happen. It is inconceivable on the highest and most unselfish theory of virtue. I cannot but think, therefore, that the question before us is perfectly proper, and may be proceeded with; and that what I said, in hinting at the ground on which it can receive an affirmative reply, was perfectly defensible. Virtue,—however highly our friend may conceive of it, or however grandly or eloquently he may talk—*cannot* be understood to require or involve the giving up of our well-being in *both* worlds. Since, therefore, it must be supposed to secure the happiness of *one*, it is by no means unbecoming to inquire—Whether it may not be pursued on such a principle, or exist under such conditions, as to become conducive to the happiness of *two?*

PART II.

THE CONSTITUENT ELEMENTS OF A SATISFACTORY AND BEAUTIFUL FORM OF LIFE IN THE PRESENT WORLD.—A THEORY.

PART II.

THE CONSTITUENT ELEMENTS OF A SATISFACTORY AND BEAUTIFUL FORM OF LIFE IN THE PRESENT WORLD:—A THEORY.

HAVING cleared the way by thus settling these preliminary matters,—which ought not, perhaps, to have detained us so long, and which certainly would not have done so but for the interruption to which we have been exposed,—we shall now proceed to the question of the evening. In inquiring whether it is possible to make the best of both worlds, it may be as well, perhaps, to begin by endeavouring to get a general idea of *what it is to make the best of the present one.* What, or how much, is it wise or right to include in that?

Before, however, enumerating the things which go to make up this general idea, I must be allowed to explain that I do not understand the phrase, "to make the best of the world," in its absolutely highest sense. I do not undertake to use it without modification. It is not to be supposed that I am going to accumulate in a single person, the enjoyment of everything rare and valuable in life,—all

desirable possessions, and that, too, in their largest proportions, and for a lengthened term; and then to tell every one of you that all this may be yours! Nobody, I imagine, expects that the question means, whether it is possible either for one man, or for men in general, to unite in themselves the highest rank, the greatest talents, the most wonderful genius, the largest amount of property, the enjoyment of everything that belongs to the gratification of the intellect, the passions, the senses, and the heart,—philosophy, fame, power, and so on—the splendour of Solomon, the successes of Alexander, the united achievements of Bacon and Shakespeare, with the reputed wealth of your Couttses and Rothschilds! To attach ideas like these to the phrase would be absurd; to tie us down to them in our reasonings would be unfair. The question is put in a popular form,—its discussion is intended for popular use. The language is not the most exact; but we all understand that something is meant to be indicated by it, *which may possibly be realized in ordinary life*; the exposition of which may interest and benefit a class of persons, none of whom are ever likely, or ever expect to be kings or heroes, Miltons or millionaires. We understand, then, the phrase, "the possibility of making the best of life,"—not in so absolute a sense as to be ridiculous in idea, or even in such a sense as could only be realized by one or two in a generation or a century, but,—as to what might be done with life by the generality of mankind, so as to work it into some-

thing good and desirable, something that should constitute it an agreeable and happy, a bright and joyous possession, out of which a large preponderance of enjoyment, and that, too, of a high and valuable sort, might be got. If this is done by any one,—done, according to his position, powers and opportunities,—I should say that he makes *a good thing* of life—and that is what I understand the question to mean—though others might be so circumstanced as to *appear*, at least, to make a good deal more of it. Now, don't imagine that this modification of the subject is either an evasion of the question, or that it will reduce a supposed affirmative reply to almost nothing. The question being asked, does not bind me to answer it affirmatively at all. To give it an answer, one way or another, it is necessary to understand it in some plain, intelligible sense. That which I have referred to is, I think, just what any fair, reasonable man would attach to the words; while, in relation to the extent and compass of the answer which may be given to it, even thus modified—of *that* you will judge, when you have put together, and counted and weighed the things which I am now going to enumerate.

In the general idea, then, of making the best of life, or of the present world, I include the following things:—

As the great peculiarity of our present condition of existence is, that we live in a body; and as the fitness and adaptation of this body to the purposes of life depend on its soundness and vigour—in one

word, on good physical HEALTH,—I begin with this. In some very few extraordinary cases, it has happened, that persons of feeble or diseased bodily structure have been able to accomplish great things. In general, however, good health is essential to the successful pursuit of the business of living. I have a great idea of vigour and elasticity of limb and muscle; strength for action 'or endurance; brain and heart, lungs and liver, all in such thorough condition that a man never for a moment thinks about them!—does not *know* he has a stomach,—is unconscious of languor, head-ache, dyspepsia,—and is thus fitted, not only for protracted and cheerful physical labour, but more likely to have force of will, large general capacity, a natural inclination towards sound, masculine thought, and an innate superiority to indolence, luxury, and debilitating indulgences. It is a miserable thing when life is only one long disease, or when some conscious poverty of power, some natural feebleness, or some latent, morbid tendency, compels a man to be always thinking about himself; forbids the formation of plans and restrains from efforts and enterprises, which might otherwise be successfully indulged or attempted. Good health is not only important to a man's making the best of life, but may be regarded as included in that best itself. All the parts of the physical structure being sound and good, fitted for their work, and constantly acting in harmony with each other, not only makes the body an efficient and nimble servitor for the soul, but is productive of

that buoyant and pleasurable consciousness which attends health, and which of itself makes a man feel it a privilege to live.

Next to health of body, I mention that healthiness of the soul, which consists in calm and equable animal spirits. I want a natural, unaffected, quiet, uniform CHEERFULNESS. The mind must be at ease. There must be rest and repose there;—freedom from solicitude, despondency, and perturbation;—no wearing, grinding thoughts eating into the heart; no sinking of the spirit of the man under frequent or constant depression and gloom. Nothing can be either done or enjoyed in life, if the mind is liable to be torn or tormented thus. It unfits for exertion; it destroys energy; it withers hope; it represses ambition; it makes the will to vacillate, and the judgment to falter; it terrifies and alarms, or crushes and annihilates; it makes a man timid, dastardly, uncertain, useless! To be thus a prey to what corrodes and distracts, disturbs and depresses, is to have life utterly poisoned and devastated. Its light is darkened, its colours fade, its smiles and sunshine are absorbed and quenched. Instead of being replenished with things beautiful and attractive, it is dull, barren, empty, and unprofitable! To be made the best of, or as a part of the result, I want the world to appear to a man in something like sunlight. I want him to walk as a child of the day, not like a thing creeping and cowering in the darkness. If not always or often among flowers and verdure, at

least let him believe and rejoice that such things *are*. In spite of occasional changes within and without, I want him to advance with the signs about him of a genial cheerfulness; something of the blue sky of childhood, the bright cloudlessness of his early days going with him through life; "the child's heart within the man's." I want the morning to find him without anxiety,—the night to descend without bringing with it sleeplessness or terror. Let the darkness and the light be both alike to him; a calm, tranquil, joyous heart prompting and furnishing "his matins duly and his even-song."

Then I want COMPETENCE. I don't mean riches. As I have already told you, I am not in search of the absolute best,—which might include in it the tip-top idea of everything, and might be something either extravagant and impossible in itself, or only likely to be realized once or twice in a hundred years. I have to do with common life, with the ways and means of ordinary happiness, with such possibilities as may be within the reach of the generality of mankind, especially of such as belong to the class or classes now before me. I don't, then, insist on riches as being essential to your making the best of life. I don't include wealth in the idea,—as wealth is generally understood. I have no wish for each of you to find a little California, or to have a legacy left you, or to get a prize in a lottery, or to come across any other means of becoming suddenly rich, or rich at all. I believe in the necessity and

propriety of inequality of conditions. I think it right that there should be masters and servants, capitalists and workmen, labourers with the brain and labourers with the back; one man with the pen in his hand, and another with the hod on his shoulder; principals and subordinates, handicraft and headcraft, in all their varieties;—with all their differences of rank and wages, fortune and circumstance. I believe this to be the order of nature and the will of God. I have no faith in the dead level of any sort of communism or equality;—for if even all were rich, all would be poor. I do not mean then by competency, wealth. When speaking for the many, I do not ask as an element in the best of life, or for making the best of it, what can only belong to the few. My aim is to get within the reach of the majority, as my belief is that God wills that in all ranks, and in connexion with great differences of condition, men should be equally capable of making life beautiful and happy. In order to this, then,—in order, indeed, to his making *any* thing of life,—it is important to a man to have the means of living. For real comfort, these means must be equal to his position in the world, and be available without his being subject to incessant anxiety. Wealth, I admit, is power. It gives great influence, secures from many annoyances, elevates and fortifies a man's position, and opens facilities for attempting and effecting what others might dream of in vain. Still, all that is required for ordinary happiness,—for

making life into a good and an agreeable thing, is competence;—meaning by that, resources suitable to the rank of the individual, sufficient to support his credit and respectability. Along with this, for most men, I should put the feeling and consciousness of *getting on*,—of success and advancement, gradual, if you please, but real and certain. The glory of life, then, we understand, does not consist in, or depend on, our being rich. To be a poor man, in a certain sense, is not in fact incompatible with greatness. There are such poor men in all ranks. *Poverty*, however, in the full force of the term,—poverty, as implying habitual embarrassment, present or prospective want, is a great evil! It is a terrible thing, night and day to have the wolf at the door and the vulture at the heart;—for things to be always getting worse;—for place and position to become deteriorated;—for the circle of associates to narrow or change, till nothing is left of what it once was! Felt or apprehended pecuniary liabilities, with the consciousness of incompetency to meet them, is just a constant burning hell upon earth. "He that sleeps too soundly, let him borrow the pillow of a debtor." When poverty has done its worst, what sordidness attends it!—what squalor and filth! How it chills the affections, wrings the heart, debases the habits!—brings, often, a torpor and sluggishness on the understanding, and always injures or endangers the character! But long before its last stage, poverty,—when it exists only as

pecuniary pressure and difficulty,—is often a fearful temptation to a man. To stave off an evil, to arrest it, to gain a little temporary advantage or relief, he will twist his words, and sophisticate his understanding, and say this, and promise that,—thinking all the time that he is keeping within the limits of truth or probability, though in fact he is both deceiving others and himself. It is a common saying, and it is very true, that people would be more happy if they were more virtuous; alas! it is also true, and it should sometimes be remembered, that many would be more virtuous if they were more happy. Comfortable circumstances are very conservative of honesty and honour. It is easy to do well, when it is impossible to be tempted;—it is easy,—and not very particularly meritorious. It is really no great virtue in any of us not to steal. You would never think of putting it to the credit of our excellent Chairman, here, Sir Edward Buxton, that he had never been tried at the Old Bailey for a petty theft, and, moreover, was really so virtuous, that he was never likely to appear there! For some men, you know, to do some things would be a great disgrace, while their not doing them is no virtue. It is easy to be superior to mean temptations when you can purchase and pay for whatever you need. Very noble sentiments may be indulged and uttered,—very high ideas entertained of what is just and honourable,—when there is nothing in the form of debt, or liability, or threatened ruin, to deprave or deaden the moral

sense. It is easy to despise the mean and the false, and to eschew and condemn the subterfuge and the equivoque, when there is nothing to wring the cry out of the soul—"My poverty, but not my will consents!" Depend upon it, a competent income is a very capital thing, both for comfort and character. A feeling, too, of progressive advancement and steady success in life, is no inconsiderable item in your making the best of it.

Living in society, another important element in our making the best of life is REPUTATION. We are so constituted that, as a general rule, we really cannot get on without this. It makes no matter what a man believes or disbelieves; whether he thinks there is a God or not, or a futurity or not; nor, indeed, whether there really be either the one or the other. The *fact* of the importance of character in the present life, does not depend either on there being another, or on a man's particular belief about it. Independently of all this, the laws of our nature and the constitution of society are such, that there is no securing or accomplishing anything without reputation. A man must have the confidence of his fellows. He must live in their esteem and respect. He cannot bear to be deserted by all who have ever stood by him;—to be daily pointed at by those before whom he may be obliged to move, and with some of whom he may have to meet and act;—to be "sent to Coventry" by the circle to which he belongs, or to be forcibly ejected and forbidden to return! Very

few can stand this. Even if there be no God whose frown is to be feared, or none believed in, the bold bad man is often cowed and crushed by the frown of society. Hardly an individual can bear up against the loss of character, when that is justified by his own consciousness. Man was not made for this. The thought of being suspected disturbs him, the certainty of being despised torments. To stand solitary and alone, destitute of friends, avoided or scorned, none to sympathize with or to sustain him—it is a fearful doom, and fearfully sometimes has it terminated. Even when an individual has become insensible to shame, and has contentedly herded with the abandoned and the lost, the idea of his destitution—his want of character—has not ceased to haunt and to disturb him. There was Colonel Charteris, for instance, the most accomplished villain of the last century,—a scorned, despised, downright, out-and-out, thorough scoundrel,—even he would sometimes say—"I wish I had a character!" I would give ten thousand pounds for a character!" And though he was rascal enough to add—as if to relieve us from the idea of his feeling any *moral* distress at his situation—"I would give ten thousand pounds for a character, *because I could make twenty thousand by it*," even with this drawback, his anxiety is sufficient to evince and illustrate the value of the possession in respect to the world in which we now are. Independently, however, of what might be made by it,—simply in relation to a man's own con-

sciousness,—character is of the utmost importance as an essential part of the lustre of life. To have the respect of your associates, the confidence of society, to be looked up to, honoured, trusted, to be regarded as worthy of all this, and to know that you possess it,—this is reputation, and a very great element it is in making life beautiful and happy.

To all that I have enumerated, I would add the mention of A GREEN OLD AGE. "Age," says Ossian, "is dark and unlovely." No:—not always. It might be so among "savage clans and roaming barbarians," before they had received "the elements of knowledge and the blessings of religion." But age, with us, is often a refreshing and a beautiful sight. There are old men and old women that look as bright and brisk as their grandchildren! It is delightful to see a man who, having passed the previous stage of life with credit and honour, approaches the last, and goes through it with contentment and cheerfulness. Look at him. There's a good deal of many of his wonted attributes about him yet; force in his intellect, freshness in his feelings, light in his eye, and vigour in his limbs! He reviews the past without pain and without complaint. He is not querulous, selfish, misanthropic. He does not confound and frighten the young by constantly telling them of "the howling wilderness" into which they have been born, and of the wretched thing they will find life to be. He has not found it anything of the sort. The world has proved to him a very pleasant place, and life an

interesting though eventful journey. Life did not turn out, perhaps, just what he fancied and dreamt about as a boy, or even as a man; it became a rougher, but, withal a better and nobler thing. He does not, therefore, attempt to touch too rudely the dreams of the young enthusiasts about him. He listens to them with interest and pleasure;—sometimes with a significant but loving silence, sometimes answering and encouraging with genial sympathy. He does not destroy their hopes and anticipations, for while he feels that they will probably be fulfilled in a way somewhat different from what is projected, he feels, also, that they may *be* fulfilled, and that life may become to his successors what it has been to him. His hoary head is a crown of glory; his name fragrant as incense. He stands the centre of a large and widening circle of descendants:—children and children's children gather about him. He did not live without the exercise and solace of the affections. He loved and married, had wife and home, sons and daughters, with the usual mixture of the cares and satisfactions of domestic life; and he is rich now in the bright beings that sparkle around him in the fading twilight of his protracted day, and who at once adorn the scene and dilate the heart. It is a fine thing to see old age thus crowned and blessed; the man happy in himself, satisfied with the world, thankful to have lived; looking to the past without shame, to the future without fear; leaving behind him in his immediate descendants the manly and

intelligent, who are taking their stand and making their way in life as genuine offshoots of the parent tree,—*their* little ones again, like tender seedlings, springing up, fresh with the dew of their own early morning, beautiful to the eye of the old man as they glisten in the light of his evening sun! Yes; "children's children are the crown of old men—the glory of children are their fathers." I have often admired that saying of Solomon. It is true to nature to the very letter, and shows, as so many things in the Bible do, how humanity is at present just what it was three thousand years ago. A little child, or even a youth, looks upwards, realizing in his parent the highest object to him on earth,—all that attracts love, respect, trust, and reverence,—and says, exultingly, to himself or others, "that's my papa,"—"that is my father!" The old man looks downward, and in gazing on his grandchildren seems to become the subject of a new affection. He does so,—and it is his last. The heart has none other to pour forth,—life nothing further to bestow. The man's course is "crowned" and consummated by this. Whether it is that he simply likes the idea of going down in his posterity, and rejoices in the first proofs of the advancing line; or whether it is the revival of his former feelings,—the gushing again towards his new representative, but with additional elements, of the love that welled around the cradle of his son; whatever it may be, certain it is that there is this exultant sentiment described by

Solomon in the breast of the old man as he looks on his children's children.—"There's a fine fellow!—that's my son's boy! and see here, this is my daughter's little girl! Bless the dears! I'm quite proud of them." I dare say you are, old friend,—and every one that has a heart shares your delight. "One touch of nature makes the whole world kin." In palace or cottage, hall or hamlet, a green and hearty old age like this, is beautiful to the eye, and all its affections, and even its fancies venerable and sacred. It is no despicable world, young men, you may be sure, that can show us specimens of its productions like that. Life is made a tolerably good thing of, when it can be used, and spent, and "crowned" *so.*

In drawing this enumeration to a close, I have to add further that, in connexion with all that I have referred to as contributing to a desirable and happy life, I include THE CULTURE OF THE INTELLECT, as well as the affections; and, underlying all, I require *some source and spring of consolation and strength equal to the pains and the pressure of inevitable sorrow.* We have understanding and memory, taste and imagination; we are capable of acquiring general knowledge, of forming an acquaintance with science, and deriving pleasure from the beautiful. Our number of ideas can be almost indefinitely increased; our perception of what stands before us in nature and art (unrevealed to the untaught or unpractised eye) wonderfully improved and sharpened. Know-

ledge with its substantial realities, in all the diversified departments of truth; Beauty with its variety of attractive forms, as exhibited in the works of God, in the utterances or achievements of genius, in words or things, in poetry or eloquence, in writing or discourse, in painting, music, statuary, and song:—these are high sources of personal enjoyment; contact and acquaintance with them may add greatly to the beautifulness of life. I do not say that any individual man needs to become familiar with *all* these things, or that men in general are to make it an object to push inquiry or acquisition in any department to the farthest extent; this would be as absurd as to make it a rule that everybody should be rich. While simply stating the *fact* that knowledge and taste, science, literature, and art, do contribute to high ends and sterling satisfactions, I would only be understood to say, that *some* attention may be given to them, or to one or other of them, by most persons, along with a proper regard to their necessary pursuits. It is incumbent on the great majority of mankind to be constantly handling the rude materials of trade and merchandise; but there may be generally associated with such regular and laborious business-occupations an "attention to reading" that will multiply and heighten the enjoyments of the individual, and give such a colour and finish to life as greatly to enhance its dignity and beauty. Let it ever be remembered, however, that in spite of all that may be united in the course

and condition of the most favoured of mortals, there are "ills which flesh is heir to,"—which, as its entailed inheritance, all the partakers of humanity must share one time or other, with more or less aggravation of circumstance. It is impossible to prevent or to elude suffering. In some form, it is universally the lot of man. Pain and disappointment, sorrow and misfortune, change and death, must be expected to affect every individual,—invading the circle of his connexions, approaching and touching himself. There are calamities which none can control; the causes of which are not to be found among such as the individual could voluntarily have influenced by anything omitted or done. Even in the course of the most prosperous career, in cases where men meet with no sudden vicissitude, no stunning shock or prostrating blow, there are yet griefs and evils, manifold and various, which cannot be evaded, which *must* be borne, and which ought, therefore, to be adequately prepared for, and manfully met. I want, then, such adequate preparation of some sort or other, that there may be the manifestation of this manly courage. I wish, in a beautiful and good life, valour to sustain the onsets of sorrow; to repel, if possible, threatened danger, or to bear up under the infliction of evil; to submit with grace and dignity to the inevitable; to acquiesce in the worst and severest of trials; and to improve all to high purposes and noble ends,—rising out of the depths of distress, and re-appearing after darkness and tears, strong,

resolute, serene. Whatever may happen, let us have a man that can recover himself; who, after being crushed and worsted for a while by sorrow or misfortune, will seize again with a firm hand Duty and Work, advance with elastic step to renewed effort,—yielding his heart, unreluctantly, to fresh impulses of pleasure and joy. As then, in the experience of all men, there cannot but be the mixture of good and evil, we require in all, in connexion with whatever is fortunate and happy, internal resources of consolation and strength equal to the demands of calamity and sorrow.

Putting all these things together, let us see what we have got. Bodily health, mental cheerfulness, competent income, advance in life, established reputation, the solace of the affections in wife and children, the culture of the understanding, imagination, and taste, internal resources adequate to the occasions of inevitable evil,—all possessed and carried forward for years, and crowned at last with a green bright, happy old age! Why, if all this really can be found in any one man, such a fact would seem to prove that it *is* "possible" to make something unquestionably good, happy and desirable, out of the raw material of the present life. The world, on this hypothesis, might certainly become by no means an unendurable place. Whether there is to be another one or not, I can suppose a man to be so satisfied with passing through this *after such a fashion*, as to be deeply thankful for having been permitted to live,

though he might not have the prospect of living again. If there be no God, the man may wonder at the existence and movements of a system which, somehow or other, could produce a being like himself, and a life like his,—and he may be depressed by the thought that there is no One anywhere whom he can thank for his enjoyments. If there *be* a God, *let* him be thankful. Let him love Him and praise Him for what He has done, even if he should see it right to do no more. I have no notion that the reasons for religion and the religious affections are to be sought for solely in the fact of another world, when we are living in and possessing a world like this. Look at the man before us. He *was* nothing; he could *deserve* nothing; and yet he awoke up one morning and found himself alive!—with the earth beneath and the heavens above him; with life before him; and within him, the powers and capabilities of making it into something great and beautiful. It has become this to him. So has he used the world, and so enjoyed it. If there is not another, I really cannot see that he has any right to complain. I can easily understand that he may have enjoyed life so much as to *wish* it reproduced, and I think it exceedingly natural that he should *believe* it will be; but whether it will or not, does not and cannot alter the *fact* that the present world has immense resources, of which he has had the benefit, and for which he ought to be thankful. But, whatever may be thought of this particular opinion, there is no denying the

moderate, conditional statement with which we conclude this part of our argument, namely, that *if* it be possible for all the things we have enumerated to meet in and distinguish the earthly lot of any one man, then it has been possible for that man to make the life that now is, into something thoroughly satisfactory. He has made the best of it: not in the sense of doing what was possible to be done with an acknowledged evil, but of turning to their best uses valuable elementary capabilities. But what has been possible to *him*, may be possible to others. What one man does, another man *may* do. It might be well to know how to do it. I wonder if it can be done on any one principle better than another! Supposing that there is a second world, I wonder if it could be done in consistency with your making the best of *that* too! Perhaps we shall see.

PART III.

THE THEORY PRACTICALLY WROUGHT OUT.

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So far, then, as the question before us bears on the present life, it would seem that it really is quite possible for *it*, at least, to be made into something very satisfactory, since it is a simple matter of fact that some men do contrive to get this out of it. There can be no doubt that the things just enumerated have met in the lot of individuals many and many a time. We have all known instances of this. The picture that has been drawn is only what most of us have seen realized in the facts of actual life. We can form, too, very distinct ideas of the several items which go to constitute what we call making the best of the world we live in. The next point, then, to be considered is,—in what way these several items are most likely to be evolved, or secured, in the case of any particular individual? Take, for instance, a young man with the world before him,—a youth, passing through his teens, or approaching the end of them;—on what principle, we ask, shall such an one start, with the best, or most probable, prospect of success?—how is the great experiment of living, so

far as this life only is concerned, most likely to be conducted, by this young man, to a happy, and satisfactory result?

Now, nobody can doubt that what we call virtue, or good moral principles and habits, is that which, instrumentally, will go a great way towards securing the result sought; or, at least, that the result will not, and cannot, be secured without it. The virtuous may not succeed in relation to *all* the things that have been enumerated, but certainly none but the virtuous *can*,—ever did,—or ever will. It is no use questioning that. The point to be now raised is, not whether virtue is essential to a man's rationally making the best of life; but *where we are to look for the virtue?* Whence will the virtue we want, soonest and most directly spring?—On what ground shall it stand, to be strong and unassailable?—What motives will give to it such force of command, and such steady regularity of action, that the several things already enumerated, so far as they depend on virtue, will be most likely to be secured or preserved?

We take it, you see, to be a matter of fact, that virtue best promotes human happiness; but we now add, as a matter of doctrine, that it must not be cultivated *for the sake of this*. It will not do for the claims of virtue to be referred to its prospective benefits;—especially will it not do for a man to have to consider and calculate the probable results of each particular action. If a man has thus to decide in

detail upon his conduct, from the perception of the tendency of what he does, in every given case, to promote his interests or happiness, he will not only be exposed to perpetual annoyance from his mind being occupied with low calculations, and from doubt and hesitation in particular instances, but he will be in danger of making many and great practical mistakes. We want virtue, then, to spring from something that shall secure *it*—independently of the thought of what *it* is to secure. We want men to have within them a principle of obedience, which shall prescribe and enforce morality, on other grounds than its present beneficial results. Men must be virtuous without everlastingly thinking of what virtue is to do for them.

Now, what is thus sought may be found, I think, in a regard to the will of God, *as such.* Every one will allow, that if there be a God, and his will as to our conduct can be ascertained, it must have the force of *law;* and few, I imagine, would doubt that it would have this, not because the *results* of what we were to do might be revealed by it, but simply because it declared *what was to be done.* It would greatly strengthen, however, the power of the law, if it were to be enforced by sanctions bearing on the future and eternal,—thus associating itself with the higher aspirations of the soul, and calling into exercise the impulses and sympathies of a spiritual life. Believing in the Bible, I believe that it reveals to us the will of God in relation to human duty, and that it *so* reveals

it as to fall in with what I have just said. We have here, then, a provision for what we are in search of;—virtue founded upon or flowing from religious faith. This is what I require, and what I wish to inculcate. The advantages of demanding, in moral conduct, what is enforced and nourished by religion, are manifold. Virtue is then something which flows by necessity from the conditions of the inward man, as the moral tastes are purified and exalted by harmony with God, and constrain to goodness as by the force of an instinct;—or, in another light, it is something done or maintained in obedience to authority, and not as the result of calculation;—or it is something affected by an ultimate regard to a coming eternity, and not by the thought of immediate advantage. The mind, brought under the influence of feelings and motives, inspired by what is distinct from all that lies within the circle of mundane and temporal things, is subjected to a law whose voice is clear, resolute, and uniform; which prescribes the right, not the expedient; and which opposes the power of *a principle* to the impulse of passion and the plausibility of appearances;—a principle rooted in religious faith—that faith which connects the present with the future, the throne with the judgment-seat of God. This law, however, which secures virtue by motives drawn from a higher region and another world, will, *as a matter of fact,* be found to work beneficially in relation to this lower sphere, and to man's present temporary life.

Let us take, then, the religious sentiment, and observe its elements and action. We will include in it the idea of God; his government of the world and man; providence; the duty, propriety, and advantage of prayer; human responsibility; the requirements of the Divine law; the promise of mercy in the Gospel; the aids and influences of the Holy Spirit; worship—private, domestic, public; the repression of whatever is supposed to be displeasing to God; the culture of all that He is understood to prescribe or approve; the preservation of the harmony between the inward life and the Divine will by habitual contact with Holy Scripture, and the conscientious discharge of religious acts; the avoidance of anything having in it the nature of sin—from the instinctive recoil of a purified heart, from the love of goodness as such, from fear of offending God, from repugnance to what would unfit for heaven, from the conviction that everything evil, in thought, word, or deed, must be followed, one day, with punitive results,—results injurious to the purity of man's spiritual nature, and inimical to its happiness in a higher estate. Take religion in this general view of it,—as general as we could well make it to include the Christian and revealed element at all,—take this, and we say that you will have a principle which will place virtue on a ground altogether different from the calculations of expediency or the thought of immediate benefits. It looks higher and further for obligation and motive. The regal, authoritative command issues from the lip

and the bosom of God; the heart is brought into a state of coincidence with the objective idea of duty, and is a law to itself in relation to it; while at the same time the man has respect to the action of both holiness and sin on his spiritual prospects,—his anticipated immortal condition in a future world. Now this principle, so much higher in its sphere and wider in its range than any limited to the contemplation of the interests of earth,—this, we mean to say, is just the principle most adapted to secure *the virtue of the present life*—in other words, to secure *that* on which the success and happiness of life mainly depend.

II.

We will try to illustrate this, by taking each of the things formerly mentioned, and showing the probable action upon them of the religious sentiment; its action, not from the man influenced by it thinking of these things, but by way of natural consequence from his thinking of something else.

"Is it possible to make the best of both worlds?" Is it possible to begin by making a good thing of *this?* We have seen, I think, that it is. Is it possible, then, to secure this result by securing something else,—that something else being essential to the result, but needing a firmer footing and a steadier support than the desire and pursuit of the

result itself? In *theory*, we have shown that this, too, is possible. But we now say, give us the proper subject on which to make the experiment, and we will show you *practically*, so to speak, how it may be done, or how it will naturally come to pass.

I must have a young man, with a fair average constitution, physical, and mental, to begin with. The most of the race, you know, or of those at least that live to be men, come into the world in a good condition as to bodily soundness, and with a competent amount of original faculty. Let me have a young man, then, of good health and ordinary common sense; with some degree of educational culture, and some means of getting his living. There is really nothing very extravagant in these demands. Something of course must be insisted upon if the experiment is to have a chance of success. I don't undertake to teach one to make the best of life, who has already poisoned or wasted it. I won't have put into my hands, therefore, a rake or a scoundrel, an old broken-down sinner, or an arrant fool. I cannot work with such stuff. The clay is marred, and no potter can make anything of it, but something accordant to its *condition*. I won't have, either, a man weak and imperfect in mind or body, an idiot or an invalid. I can prescribe something medicinally for all these,—something to cure or alleviate; but I can make none of them into the sort of men you want to see, and that I want to see

you. Let me have such a subject as I have described; put him into my hands; and then let me go on with the demonstration.

Well: I have got my wish, let us suppose. Here he is; just such a being as hundreds of you are, who are now before me! A young man, healthy, innocent as to positive vice or crime, educated according to his rank, of average ability, with good common-sense, and in a situation. Now, I put into him my moving and regulating power—religious faith. Or I will presuppose its existence. We are to regard him as "fearing God *from his youth.*" It would be well for him to have been judiciously trained by an intelligent Christian mother, and to have grown up under happy home influences. However, here he is now, a young man, of decided Christian principle; conscientiously loyal to the true, the upright, the just, the pure, the praiseworthy—and this, because holiness (the scriptural term for religious virtue) is required by God—is fostered by devout affections and exercises—and is to be pursued as preparatory to a future world. This young man, then, impelled and inspired thus, shall now be seen by you so to act as to preserve, or secure, by way of natural consequence, those several things which we have already enumerated as entering into what we call making the best of life. He shall preserve or secure them, not from always thinking about them, acting with a view to them, scheming and planning for them,—but because he cannot help it:—because, in living for

the higher purpose, he naturally does that which avails for the lower one. He shall make a good thing of the first world into which he comes, because he shall shape his life with a view to the second;—"seeing Him that is invisible," and "having respect to the recompence of reward."

Look at him in relation to *health*. Why, with a constitution naturally sound, he goes on in the enjoyment of the blessing. He does nothing to injure it. He contracts no bad physical habits; indulges in no debilitating excess. He is sober, prudent, chaste;—hating impure thoughts, frowning on improper conversation, and shunning immodest acts. He is not a drunkard nor a glutton, nor in any sense the slave of mere animal satisfactions. He sows in his flesh the seeds of no disease by any sort of luxury or intemperance. He does not waste his strength or weaken his mind by the pursuit of pleasure. He lives in harmony with all the laws of his constitution, and enjoys in return the vigour, spring, and elastic energy of habitual health. And he does all this, mind, not because he has studied books on the constitution of man, is learned in physical laws, or knows, scientifically, anything about them; nor because he has naturally pure instincts, and is constitutionally superior to what is low and degrading; nor because he has self-reverence and self-respect, and won't give way to what is unbecoming; nor because he thinks he can spend his money to better purpose, or has not the money

to spend; nor because he is afraid of the probable consequences of immorality—ruin to his prospects or "rottenness to his bones." All these things may have their place in his thoughts, and their separate degree of power over him; but the *principal* thing is, that he lives as he does, acts and forbears to act, because he has "*the fear of God before his eyes;*" because "he cannot do that great wickedness and sin against Him;" because he remembers "His law and commandments," and feels bound to yield to them unquestioning obedience; because he realizes the Divine presence, and acts with a view to the Divine approbation; because he knows that in the revelation of His will, God forbids him, in express words, "to sow to the flesh," "to give his strength to harlots," "to be drunk with wine, wherein is excess," or in any manner whatever "to sin against his own body:" because he is commanded to be "temperate in all things," and forewarned that "no drunkard, or whore-monger, or unclean person, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God;" because, if either Passion or Philosophy should venture to suggest to him that there can be no great harm in a little moderate transgression now and then, a voice is instantly heard of warning and reproof, "let no man deceive you with vain words, for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience;" because "the grace of God, which bringeth salvation, teacheth him to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts;" to "live soberly;"

to "present his very body as a living sacrifice," preserving it "in sanctification and honour;" because he has within him, in the principles and affections of his spiritual life, which are sustained and nourished by religious acts, *that* to which sensuality is offensive, which is hostile to it, by which its movements are repressed, and temptations to it overcome, and which is equal to the peril of any concurrence of appetite and opportunity. I don't say the man will be perfect. Within certain limits there will be failure, defeat, transgression, irregularity. But he *cannot* be vicious. He cannot act so as to ruin or injure health;—not because he thinks of that, or of that mainly, but because he has religion; and because religious faith,—the realization of the future, —will, as a principle, be to him what the recollection of the past would be to an angel who should become incarnate;—who, having to act in the body as a man, would, as an intelligence, do so, according to the law of its higher and previous life.

So with respect to *cheerfulness*. When there is not disease, inherent or inflicted, producing depression from nervous derangement, or other physical cause, mental wretchedness is generally the fruit of some form of sin. Gloom and melancholy may spring from misfortune—often another name for imprudence, though not always,—but "*minds diseased*" are so, for the most part, because their owners have themselves injured them. The man who has become a burden to himself, you may generally be pardoned for

suspecting has himself to thank for it. He has probably stabbed and wounded his conscience; poisoned or assassinated his inward life—succeeding in inflicting injuries, but not in occasioning death. His memory, stored with dark recollections, fills the past with reproving voices, the future with threatening forms. He has "loved death," and "wronged his own soul." It is covered all over with ulcerous sores. Hence his depression, gloom, agony, and terror; his torpor or restlessness, his taciturnity or babblings; his sleepless nights, and his maledictions on the day! "The wicked are like a troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt." "They flee when no man pursueth," and "tremble at the shaking of a leaf." They are "scared by visions, and terrified by dreams." The slightest and most unlikely thing will appal them. A tone of music, the voice of a child, the sight of youthful beauty, the laugh of an innocent girl, the words of a forgotten song, the mention of a name, an allusion to a place, the recurrence of a text, the verse of a hymn or psalm,—a thousand little things which nobody suspects,—may overwhelm the guilty with anguish, by unfolding the records of memory, and evoking the spectres of despair:—by letting out the waters of bitterness, and kindling burning thoughts, as if the heart was struck by an avenging rod, or wrapped in the flame of a furnace! But the man that begins life in the fear of God, and goes through it guided by religious principle,—obedient to that,—kept and guarded by it,—

why, he *cannot* be exposed to anything like this. He will never come within a thousand miles of it, or ten thousand, or ten thousand times ten thousand! We suppose him to start influenced by religious faith, and that he acts in practical consistency with it. His life, therefore, will be free from gross sins, from deliberate delinquency or secret wrong. His tastes and habits, equally with his principles, will preserve him from all this. He will "walk with God;" will "keep himself unspotted from the world;" do nothing to burden his conscience, and carry nothing about him to disturb his peace. This man will have no burning coal lying on his heart,—no ceaseless dropping of liquid fire on its raw flesh! *He* will never babble about "can you minister to a mind diseased?" He will not "be made to possess the sins of his youth." He will never "hang down his head like a bulrush;" become a grief and a mystery to anxious friends; or be afraid of the face of man or woman! He will know nothing of agitation or remorse,—of fearing the night, and yet shunning the day. He will sleep like a child, and wake like a lark, and be ever as a bird in its nest or on the wing. "This is the lot of them that fear God;"—not because they live with a view to this, but because, from higher motives, and with loftier aims, they regulate their lives by the rules of Scripture, and form them on the lessons of religion. Hence it is that the course of a good man is as a constantly uttered psalm. It is symmetrical and harmonious, and ministers music to

himself and others. He realizes and illustrates the pregnant words of the grand old Book,—"great peace have they that love thy law, and nothing shall offend them;" "thy statutes have been my song in the house of my pilgrimage;" "in the keeping of thy commandments there is great reward;" "the wicked is filled with his own ways, and the good man is satisfied from himself."

So in respect to *competency* and *success in life*. All the virtues inculcated by religion are favourable to a man's passing comfortably through the world, and even to his advancement in it, so far as that is regulated by ordinary laws, and looked for within reasonable limits. Sudden turns of fortune, singular talents, and remarkable opportunities, we put aside. At the same time, it should never be forgotten that the most astonishing aptitude for business will seldom secure solid and permanent success without virtue, while virtue, associated with average power, will often make a steadily advancing man. The habits of mind, speech, and behaviour which a sensible religious man will naturally cultivate, are all favourable to his retaining employment, securing confidence, improving his circumstances, and getting on,—at least, not going back. Whatever he is, whether master or servant,—and whatever he does, whether buying or selling, planning or accomplishing, working with the head or hand,—he will be conscientious, truthful, upright, just. He *ought* to be active and energetic —for the law under which he lives is, "whatsoever

thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might." He will be punctual, exact, courteous, conciliatory. While under authority, he will be careful of the time and property of his employers; watchful of their interests; jealous of their reputation:—he will be ready to serve and please, will avoid giving offence, will neither be pert and assuming, nor sluggish and sulky; will be loyal himself, and promote loyalty and respect in others; will, without grumbling, make an effort to meet the demand of a pressing emergency, and feel as glad in securing a point for "our house," as if the concern and all that belonged to it were his own. Religious virtue is favourable to industry and economy, thriftiness, and forethought. "He that provides not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, has denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel." A religious man of business should be discreet, cautious, circumspect; he is not forbidden indeed to be bold and venturesome, within safe and reasonable limits;—to add to the objects or branches of his merchandise, to extend or change his connexions, to alter something in the form of his pursuits, to embark capital in a supposed profitable investment, or, in other ways, to attempt to increase his profits and "lay up" for the time to come;—but, he should never enter and, acting consistently with his professed principles, he never *will* enter, into any hazardous or reckless speculation; he will have nothing to do with anything suspicious in its moral aspect; he

will not suspend rise or ruin on a dubious possibility; he will not dare to risk his all in "*hasting* to be rich."

An intelligent and virtuous young man (to come back again to the class before me) will have neither vices nor vanities; he will not be in the habit of spending his earnings on expensive pleasures,—in dress and ornaments at theatres and casinos. His spare time will be given to books,—to the acquisition of general knowledge, or to mastering the theory of business, and getting ready for possible openings and opportunities; to innocent recreation; to intercourse with respectable friends and acquaintance; to getting or doing good. He will risk nothing by late hours at night; he will excite no suspicions in the morning by his heavy eyes and languid gait;—his gaping and absence suggesting the idea that some folly or debauch had made him stupid and useless when he should be wide awake. There will be no glaring mistakes in his accounts; no frequent necessity for revision. He will not be continually wanting more time to get up what is required. He will not stare with ignorant wonder, or be silent with conscious shame, when appealed to about something that he ought to know, or might have known;—the thorough masterhood of which, had he known it, would have been the making of him. He will not be passed over as unpromising or incompetent, when necessary changes are to be made in the establishment, opening, to the tested and qualified, the ob-

served and approved, rise in rank and advancement of income. In the same way, the journeyman and mechanic, who may have little thought, prospect, or ambition of being anything else, by industry, steadiness, sobriety, and all the other virtues which worldly prudence recommends, but which religion at once inculcates and secures, will keep in work, gain confidence, and gradually get to be a sort of fixture about the place: he will have things comfortable and happy at home, a coat on his back and a watch in his pocket, bread in the kitchen and books on the shelves; his family will all be respectable in appearance, and will always be at worship on the working-man's day of weekly rest; his children will mostly receive a somewhat higher education than their father, and, though *he* may not, it is next to certain that they, or some of them, will rise to a higher level in life.—So of the master: the young principal, venturing into business as a partner or alone, who has probity, honour, scrupulous integrity; who displays activity, tact, attention; who conscientiously limits his private expenses; and who, whatever he has to deny himself, struggles to maintain his commercial credit; who, as at once a religious and sensible man, has a quiet conscience, a pure heart, a true lip, clean hands, and a clear head;—why, all these things have a natural tendency to help him on, —not to mention God's blessing on earnest goodness and honest work. "The hand of the diligent maketh rich." But there is such a thing as a diligent,

but bad man making money, and, from God withholding his blessing, "putting it into a bag with holes." And there is such a thing as "God giving a man power to get wealth;" blessing "his basket and his store;" advancing him in condition and honour, and thus, age after age, repeating the story, and realizing again the experience of the young Hebrew exile,—"the Lord was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man." Now, mind, I don't mean to say that goodness, religious virtue, is always, and as such, to expect secular success; other things besides virtue,—talents, opportunity, experience, tact, and so on, have to do with this,—but I do say, that without virtue, *the other things* won't of themselves avail, or avail permanently and securely; that virtue will always get a man respectably through life, and, in a general way, improve his condition; and that thus, for ordinary purposes, and up to a certain point, it is *sure* to have its reward.

But I must add here, and I request you to mark it, that virtue will do this, in all thoroughly earnest religious men, not because it is cultivated with this view, but because it is that to which they are at once attracted and impelled by feelings and motives of another sort,—by a state of mind belonging to a diviner life, related to a higher sphere, than anything connected with the favour of man, the desire of advancement, or direct regard to the material interests of the present world. The man who acts in uniform

consistency with the impulses and law of religious faith, *cannot help* having the commercial virtues;—talents he may not have, nor uncommon luck, nor capital chances,—but these he *must* have, and these are at once conservative and propelling, and will often promote that steady improvement, and secure that moderate competency, which are better than many a splendid fortune. I know it is thought that religious people have a great many drains upon them in the way of payments and subscriptions to this and the other institution or society. Why, a worldly man will often spend more in a single evening, in giving a ball and supper, or treating a party to the Opera, than many a religious man of the same rank is required to pay for his religion in a year. Depend upon it, the truth, in more senses than one, is,—that there is nothing so expensive as sin;—nothing so exhausting as pleasure. The man who is the slave of neither may have other expenses, but, all things else being equal, he will generally be best prepared for making a deposit, getting credit or security, or taking a step onwards from his present position. A carefulness to maintain an inward harmony with the upper world, by preserving him from the follies and clothing him with the virtues of this, will often command, without his aiming at them as a chief end, the prosperity and success which the laws that regulate society attach, as a natural consequence, to inexpensive habits and true worth. Our young friend here, who is about to commence the experiment of living, and who is resolved

to conduct it, from this time forth, according to the principles we have just been expounding,—he, I have little doubt, will find in his personal experience the truth of many of those statements and assurances which the Bible makes to the religious man of the world. It assures him, for instance, that the man "who is careful to see to the state of his flocks" will find them increase; that "he that walketh uprightly walketh surely;" that "integrity and uprightness preserve a man;" that "the hand of the diligent rules;" that "he who is attentive to his business shall stand before kings;" that "the man is blessed that feareth the Lord, and that walketh in his ways;" —that "he eats of the labour of his hands," is "happy" in his family, with his "fruitful vine" and his "olive branches," and that all things go "well with him;" and that Divine Wisdom,—practical religious virtue,—in proffering to the young her rewards, holds out to them, to fix their choice and animate their efforts, "in her right hand length of days, and in her left riches and honour."

So with respect to *reputation*. It is hardly necessary to prove that the man whose principles and conduct are what we describe will secure this. The fact is, men of this sort *cannot help* having a character. They have no need to offer ten thousand pounds for it. It would be a poor article that could be bought at all. It would be dear at a doit. You may estimate reputation by money in giving damages for libel, being guided by supposed actual pecuniary injury; but you

cannot buy it at any price. Reputation is like love—"if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned." It must be the spontaneous homage of society to true and recognised excellence, or it is nothing. Now, a thorough sound-hearted, out-and-out, upright and downright good man, *has* excellence, real worth, and he will come, of necessity, to have reputation. He will not act *for the sake* of reputation; he will not be just, truthful, beneficent, for the sake of obtaining the good opinion of society; he has reasons in himself for adhering to virtue, far stronger than this;—reasons, too, up yonder, in the observing eye of a Father in heaven to be pleased and served, which would make him do all he does, if (supposing that were possible) there was not a human being upon earth but himself. In proportion as he is known, indeed, he is trusted, respected, highly esteemed, well reported of, but, he *is* what occasions all this, without this being the inducement;—and he would choose to be what he is, if he had no contemporaries from whom respect could come, or if they universally chose to withhold it. That is a fine saying of old *Polonius* to his son, with which he closes his sundry pieces of advice,—

> "This above all—To thine own self be true;
> And it must follow, as the night the day,
> Thou canst not then be false to any man."

Good;—very good that. Self-respect,—the practical result too of what that teaches, your being thoroughly

just and true to yourselves,—will of course prevent you from being false to others, because that would be to do yourselves dishonour. It would be doing what was unworthy of you, and thus to yourselves be a disloyalty and a wrong. If a man, however, goes higher than this, if he lives "as seeing Him who is invisible," and takes as the rule of his behaviour, "still to thy God be true," it will follow, with yet more certainty than from *Polonius's* principle, that "he cannot then be false to any man." He whose highest idea is what he owes to himself, may do many things of a very questionable sort in the estimation of the man who has the higher idea of what is owing to God; and, in these our times, public opinion, with all its one-sidedness, is for the most part, or in the end, in favour of him who holds to the most elevated standard of duty.

That the man, then, who lives under the influence of religious faith, and who, in consistency with that influence, "brings forth his fruit in his season"—the various virtues becoming his age, his position in society; and the successive relations he sustains in life,—that such a man will have a character, and maintain it, and grow in reputation and honour, is just the natural course and tendency of things in this world of ours, unjust as some people think it, out of joint and rickety as it certainly is. No man is generally or permanently misjudged. None can be entirely mistaken or concealed, whether bad or good. The one like putrid matter, the other "like precious ointment," will diffuse

what must betray them. If a man is not actually true and just, he will get suspected and become known, however plausible his manners, smooth his tongue, innocent his look, or clever his transactions,—and sometimes the cleverer the sooner. Something strikes some one; an unpleasant idea is somewhat reluctantly admitted; it is kept secret; but—somebody else hinting something like it, it finds words, and by-and-by the thing is discovered to have a lodgment in many minds: and so it works, till the individual himself is made unmistakeably aware as to how he stands in public estimation. So, if a man deserve reputation he will have it. If he has never for a moment swerved from the right; if he has always been scrupulously exact and true;—why, nobody will think of saying the contrary. If a man is above suspicion, as a general rule he will not be suspected; people will neither talk of nor treat him as unworthy of confidence. For the most part, almost always in the long-run, men are pretty much what they are thought to be. It is no easy matter, depend upon it, to escape detection if you try to pass yourselves off for more than you are worth;—I am speaking of character, not money, though the statement is true to a great extent in relation to *it*. It is no easy matter, I tell you, to escape being found out, if you contrive to get a reputation that does not belong to you. It belongs to some one else, then,—it is not yours. You are an impostor and a thief; and are living on the credit of stolen property. You will soon be tapped on the

shoulder, young man! Society has its moral police, as well as those with blue coats, and bands round their wrists. It has its detectives in plain clothes that are watching and dodging you, when you little think it, and without the possibility of their being observed. But they will cross your path, and stand before you visible and omnipotent, when it is time to act. Depend upon it, in spite of all your secresy and simulation, you will be weighed and measured, have your dimensions taken and your place determined, and will wake up some morning to find yourself at the bar of public opinion, and that all is known you had thought concealed, or that you at least are treated as if it were. The best way of having a reputation is to deserve it. It is the shortest, quietest, safest, most certain. It is a terrible thing to be living with something hanging over your head, that may come down upon you at any moment. How much better it is to have no fear,—to know that there is nothing to "come out." "The righteous are bold as a lion,"—while "shame is the promotion of fools." A pretty "promotion," indeed! The promotion of the pillory or the gibbet. Now, mind, there's no *chance* about this: or very little. Let no man think that reputation is a thing of accident or caprice; that it may fall on the undeserving and the fool, instead of finding out the man of wisdom and virtue. It is a thing regulated by laws almost as determinate as those that regulate the tides. There is very little of "passing in the crowd," now, any more than there will be at the last day.

"To-day, also, is a day of judgment." If you deserve to be thought well of, you will; if you don't, you won't. "The righteous" man "builds up," by way of natural consequence, "a good name;" the foolish and wicked man, in like manner, prevents its erection or "pulls it down with his hands." It cannot be helped, and it ought not to be regretted. The certainty with which disgrace follows dishonour, is only the other side of the same law that gives respect to the deserving.

Reputation may be of slow growth,—but it grows. It can rise to a height, too, and acquire a vigour, that no calumny can reach or affect. There are men in London of whom, if anything dishonourable were to be said, it *could* not be believed; it would be laughed at by all who know them, and would no more be credited than that "the deluge is coming." There are others, also, of whom men will choose to *say* nothing, but with whom they take good care to have nothing to *do*. Mind, it is quite possible for good character to sustain a temporary eclipse. I don't deny that. Misfortune may shade it for a time, or some error of judgment expose it to censure. An exasperated creditor, an inconsiderate friend, the envious, the disappointed, the malignant, may utter harsh words, or occasion or propagate injurious suspicions. But if a man be *thorough*,—true to the backbone,—his character will emerge again with unsullied lustre, neither dimmed nor tarnished by the momentary obscuration. No man, perhaps, was ever generally

suspected, condemned, or shunned, without more or less deserving it. The man who walks by the light, and is animated by the impulses of religious faith, will strive to live so as to "please God," and as the result of this, but without living for it, he will secure the respect and confidence of his fellows. In a land like ours,—in which public opinion, the general moral judgment of society, is quickened, purified, and elevated by the Gospel, as the *secondary* result of the existence among us of Christianity and the Church,—*this is the rule*. There may be some real and many apparent exceptions to it, as things go;—but we repeat and we maintain that such is the *rule*. I have no doubt that our young friend, here, will find it to be so in his own case. Acting, as we suppose he must, from the motive power we have put into him, he will secure confidence, acquire reputation, have a secure standing as a commercial man, and be highly esteemed for his personal excellence. The Scriptures themselves, which elevate his views, and purify his motives, by revealing to him the fact, and affecting him by the influences of another world, will encourage the culture of their own religious virtue in this, from *secondary* considerations of their natural and immediate beneficial effects—especially as connected with good reputation. "He that in these things" (among others, the commercial virtues),—"he that in these things serveth Christ, is acceptable to God, AND *approved of men*." "By well doing put to silence the ignorance of foolish men." "Who will harm you, if ye be followers of that which

is good?" "Abstain from the appearance of evil,—let not your good be evil spoken of." "Let no man despise you." Let any "contrary" to you "be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you." What people *say* of you, observe, is to have its importance. Not to care about that, may be the greatest heroism of principle, or the greatest hardihood of folly,—the magnanimity of a martyr, or the stupidity of an ass. If you are nobly devoted to the right and true, go on, not heeding ridicule or reproach; do your duty, and let the world talk; never mind what people say. But if you "don't care" for public opinion, because you are lost to all regard for character, and are determined to take your own course, in spite of anything that may be thought and said; why, *then*, you are just one of those fools that might be "brayed in a mortar without his folly departing from him." My friend, here, knows better than to feel or to act so. He knows that his New Testament often mentions the value of "a good report,"—"an honest report,"—being "well reported of." It even says that a bishop should not only be "blameless" in himself, but have "the good report *of them that are without*,"—general, and even Gentile society, the *world* as distinct from the Church. As to other assurances of the connexion of reputation with desert and worth, and the ultimate emergence, without injury, of real character from temporary misconception, he will find many sayings to direct and to encourage him. "The path of the just is as the shining light, shining more and more unto the

perfect day." "The righteous also shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall wax stronger and stronger." "Fret not thyself because of evil doers, because of the man that bringeth wicked devices to pass. Trust in the Lord and do good: Commit thy way unto Him; wait patiently, and *He shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noon-day.*"

So with respect to *old age.* The way in which a good man uses his body and soul, his heart and conscience;—the principles and habits favourable to character;—the practical course conducive to comfort, competence, and success;—why, all these have a direct bearing, by way of natural consequence, upon long life. He, who inherits a good constitution, may—barring accidents—generally live as long as he likes. All the laws of our nature, when respected and obeyed, work in favour of us; they are intended to do this,—to promote growth and development, to give strength, compactness, elastic force, health, perpetuity,—such perpetuity as may belong to a physical system like ours. Disease is disorder, derangement, obstruction, infection;—life may be endangered by casualty, terminated in a moment by accident, and so on. Now, there may be no avoiding a flash of lightning, or escaping a storm at sea, or surviving a collision on the rail. Fracture and injury from external things, death from unknown or uncontrolable causes, must be put out of the discussion. We then say, that, according

to all natural laws, a thoroughly virtuous, and therefore regular and temperate man, will not be likely to shorten life by sowing the seeds of disease within himself, or occasioning functional derangement. He will be better able than others to resist infection,—to be unhurt by any mysterious, malignant miasma; and he will not be exposed to some accidents that are often fatal,— those which never happen but to inconsideration, folly, and recklessness. He will sustain, too, better, and for a longer time, the wear, and tear, and toil of life. Then, as by hypothesis, our friend enjoys the peace of religion, hope in the mercy and confidence in the paternal favour of God; as, moreover, he will probably live "without carefulness," without anxious grinding thought, both from the influence of filial trust as living by faith, and from the fact of his means being equal (or *made* to be so) to his moderate desires; and still further, as we suppose him to deserve and to enjoy reputation, and to have no cause therefore for shame or fear, or any of the mental tortures of the bad:—on all these accounts, his inward life will be calm and equable, flowing on tranquil and serene, neither agitated by tumultuary pleasures, nor disturbed by corroding anxieties. But all this is favourable to life; to the orderly going of the machine;—its going without serious break or obstruction, for a long time. *Years* will affect it;—it will suffer little from anything else. When it begins to falter, it will be the effect of natural decay,—wear from the continued friction

of the parts,—the loss of motion in the wheels, the want of elasticity in the springs,—all the unavoidable result of its ceaseless activity, night and day, for the allotted term of the life of man.

The vicious die early. They fall like shadows or tumble like wrecks and ruins into the grave,—often while quite young, almost always before forty. The wicked "liveth not half his days." The world at once ratifies the truth and assigns the reason by describing the dissolute as "fast men;" that is, they *live* fast; they spend their twelve hours in six, getting through the whole before the meridian, and dropping out of sight and into darkness while others are in the glow and glory of life. "Their sun goes down while it is yet day." And they might have helped it. Many an one dies long before he need. Your men of genius, like Burns and Byron, to whom, when dissipated and profligate, thirty-seven is so fatal; and your obscure and nameless "wandering stars," who waste their youth in libertine indulgence;—they *cannot* live long. They must die early. They put on the steam till they blow up the boiler. They run at such a rate, that the fire goes out for want of fuel. The machinery is destroyed by reckless speed and rapid wear. Nothing can save them. Their physical system cannot stand the strain they put it to; while the state of their minds is often such, that the soul would eat through the substance of the most robust body, and make for itself a way of escape from the incessant hell of its own thoughts. But all proba-

bilities are on the side of a different fate for the good. Peace and contentment, religious faith and religious virtue, are so many guarantees for long life. He, too, who lives as we are supposing, will not go through the world, either as a vicious or selfish celibate. Celibacy, in some cases, is noble and virtuous; but the probability is, that an industrious, reputable, and successful man will have inclination and opportunity to obey wisely his natural impulses, and to surround himself with family satisfactions. He will "drink waters out of his own cistern," and "rejoice with the wife of his youth." She will be to him, "as the loving hind and pleasant roe." She will be "like a fruitful vine by the sides of his house;—his children as olive plants round about his table." Health and virtue in parents, generally convey, as an inheritance to their offspring, sound constitutions and good instincts. Thus, then, our friend advances through life. He attains to a hearty and green old age. "His sons come to honour," and he lives to see it; his daughters "do virtuously," he survives to rejoice and "to call them blessed." His children's children lisp his name and climb about his knees, like fresh flowers springing and waving round the root of an oak. Now all this is *possible*, you know,—because it really *does* happen; it is actually to be seen in our own circles. It is very likely to be the case with the subject of our experiment, who is to live, henceforth, cultivating all manly virtue, under the influence of Christian faith. To

every such man, the Book says, "With long life will I satisfy him, and show him my salvation;" and it describes the condition of society, when society shall be godly and virtuous, by a picture like this:— "Thus saith the Lord: There shall be old men and old women dwelling in Jerusalem, every man with his staff in his hand for every age. And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof."

And so also, in the last place, in relation to *mental culture*, and to *inward resources for meeting occasional calamity, or inevitable sorrow*. Religion is itself an education. Where the proper Christian idea of a teaching ministry is carried out, and men meet in the Church for regular instruction as well as worship, it is astonishing what a difference there will be, in respect to mental development, between two men (especially poor men) of, respectively, irreligious and religious habits. The religious man becomes of necessity a thinker and reader. He is a logician and philosopher in his way; for he becomes a theologian, and learns to follow trains of reasoning as well as to indulge the impulses of piety. He gets to know something of ancient history, sacred and profane; of the developments of truth through successive dispensations; of the grounds of national prosperity; the laws of the Divine government; the principles of moral science. He hears discussions on controverted topics, and has to balance evidence and form an opinion. He is the student of a Book

which is adapted to expand and elevate the mind, to fill it with great thoughts, to inspire it with noble purposes, to exercise the imagination, to strengthen the judgment, and to teach the true philosophy of life; he gets by the study of it mental power, from the effort required by some of its parts;—acuteness and caution, from patient comparison of passage with passage, which mutually interpret and modify each other. The sentiments and exercises of religion, the nature of worship, and the language of the Bible,—have all a tendency to call forth a sense of the beautiful, and to prepare for the perception of the grand in nature and the ideal in art. Even, however, if this should not be the case, a thoughtful and intelligent religious man cannot but have his mind generally invigorated by the habitual exercise of those faculties which religious studies quicken into activity. But it is further to be observed, that our model man, from the fact of what he makes of life, and gets out of it, will come to have leisure, and will be able to surround himself with what competence can command, and what custom ordinarily suggests to the successful. He may increase his library,—and probably will; he may enlarge his acquaintance with the educated and accomplished, and greatly augment his knowledge by conversation; and he may improve his taste by what meets his eye of the elegant and the beautiful, in the pictures on his walls and the arrangements in his garden. I know very well that it is quite possible for the sub-

stantial virtues of the religious life to be cultivated and maintained, without their being accompanied by intelligence and taste. I know, too, that it is a common joke, to refer to some of the prosperous and opulent as rude and ignorant;—with books in their libraries that are never read, and elegances around them which they cannot appreciate. I have nothing to do with this. It is enough for me that it is *also* "possible" for religion and literature to be combined; for the man who lives for another world, to find delight in the arts and sciences of this. The two things are not incompatible;—they *can* be united. I have known instances of men of business, religious men, working and toiling, getting and giving, through a long course of gradual advancement, and all the way on, reading and learning, and finding delight in the various walks of general literature. And I will further add, that I have seldom known a really sensible religious man rise in life, without observing that, however limited his original education, his mind opened to knowledge and improved in taste; that he found employment and pleasure in books; and, very often, that he got some appreciation of those utterances and achievements of genius which are the farthest removed from the counter and the till.

The religious man, too, has his peculiar resources for enabling him to sustain the shock of calamity, or to bear up under ordinary affliction. Whatever may be thought of his faith by others, the objects it looks

at and the influence it exerts are realities to *him*. He confides in a benignant Providence; believes that all things are regulated by Wisdom and Love; and that nothing can happen to him except by the will of his Father in heaven. When prostrated by some sudden stroke, or called to endure what is incident to humanity, what all one time or other must sustain, he has not to submit to it as to the unintelligent result of the working of a mere machine;—he has not to regard himself either as a victim beneath the iron foot of material laws, or as the sport of capricious accident or chance. To *him* "there is a God that judgeth in the earth;"—a presiding and regal Personality, with thought and love, purposes and ends;—who directs all things "according to the counsel of His own will," but whose will is, that "all things shall work together for good to them that love Him." He refers every event to the Supreme reason, the Infinite intelligence, believing that He whom he thus regards, is alike just, benevolent, and merciful. He expects from his trials moral advantages, believing them to be intelligently administered. He finds support in prayer to God in heaven, solace in resignation to His will on earth. He is conscious of a Divine strength springing from hope and faith,—from the belief that "the sufferings of this present time" are exactly what he needs to fit him for his anticipated higher life, and that "they are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is hereafter to be revealed." He is "persuaded" that

nothing "can separate him from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus;"—that nothing can occur beyond the strength of faith to sustain, or transcending the resources of religion to relieve. But it is not necessary to enlarge on this point. You all know that the New Testament presents, in every page, to the man who believes it, reasons for repose amid the vicissitudes of life,—from the assurance of present support, the beneficial influence of calamity and sorrow, the wisdom of the infliction, its moral purpose, its ultimate results. You know, too, that with all natural emotions and becoming manly thoughts, there mingle in the Christian mind the beliefs, hopes, impulses, and aspirations of a Divine life, which invest affliction with high attributes, and impart to it the character of a golden link between earth and heaven. "Let not your hearts be troubled:" "My grace is sufficient for thee: my strength is made perfect in weakness." "We have had fathers of our flesh who corrected us, and we gave them reverence; shall we not much rather be in subjection to the Father of Spirits and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but He for our profit, that we might be partakers of His holiness."

Now, I am not discussing, at present, the truth of Christianity, or defending the convictions of its disciples. It is enough, for my immediate purpose, to say, that Christianity is true *to him that believes it*; and to assert that the belief of its supposed

objective facts, *does* produce those supposed subjective emotions, and infuse that inward strength, of which good men tell us they have a conscious experience. Whether Christianity be true or not, is not the question just now. *Because* it exists,—and because it is what it is,—and because it is taken for that, and believed and confided in, and thoroughly carried out in heart and life,—*therefore* it is, that its consistent disciple is, in our view, supplied with adequate resources for every emergency. He cannot be overwhelmed by a sudden surprise, nor crushed, though he may be stunned, by a blow. He will not be "swallowed up with over-much sorrow," nor be left without inheritance, even should his worldly all be destroyed;—"he has in himself, and in heaven, a better, even an enduring substance." The Christian man, because his faith is a reality *to himself*, can come forth, uncrushed and uncomplaining, from severe sorrow; can re-appear, in his sphere of duty, with calm countenance and unabated vigour, feeling that he possesses internal resources of repose and strength. Work can be done again, though some may be withdrawn whose presence and companionship made labour light; and earth can be enjoyed, though its scenes may have lost to him some of their attractions. To *him*, the darkest cloud "has a silver lining;" sorrow "may continue for a night," but "light is sown in the darkness," and "joy returns with the day." Religious faith, as it exists in the Christian mind, looking on the vicissitudes and

undulations of life, and listening to their apparently confused murmur, finds, far more certainly than anything else, that God's great universe, in spite of its mysterious and sometimes appalling movements,—

> "Doth impart
> Authentic tidings of invisible things;
> Of ebb and flow, and ever-during power;
> And CENTRAL PEACE *subsisting at the heart*
> *Of endless agitation.*"

Of that peace its subjects are partakers,—"*the peace of God,* which passeth all understanding."

As I do not discuss the truth of Christianity, so I do not discuss the correlative question of the truth or falsehood of the Infidel hypothesis,—Atheism, or Secularism, or philosophic naturalism, or whatever it may be called. I will not dispute what its advocates may say of their subjective states of mind under sorrow, and of their conscious resources of peace and strength. I can suppose a man content to find, when sorrowful, relief in science; satisfied to get his reasons for repose, in what are called the consolations of philosophy;—quite willing to be confined for comfort and alleviation under the ills of life, to literary friends, and elegant pursuits, to company, convivialism, business, amusement;—I can even conceive that he may relieve his agitated feelings (if he allows them to be agitated), and quiet or dismiss his fears and solicitudes (if he choose to have any), by thinking of everything as fixed and inevitable; by believing that he is the subject of necessity and

destiny,—equally without culpability and accountableness;—and by meeting with a determined, rigid insensibility the inflictions of the great and mighty machine, that grinds him between its wheels of unintelligent force, with perfect and necessary indifference —without plan, purpose, or end! I recognise and admit all this. Thus and thus, as a matter of fact, the disciples of naturalism can feel and reason. Very well. Be it so. All that I at present affirm is, that the man of religious faith,—who, *also, as a matter of fact,* feels and reasons as we have described, be he right or wrong, wise or foolish, a philosopher or a simpleton, for believing, hoping, and trusting as he does,—*because he does* so believe and hope, has, *in that,* manifestly *the best of it* in relation to affliction; he is better equipped than others for the battle of life;—better prepared for the turn of the tide, if it goes against him; he will be more likely to sustain defeat, or recover his ground, after the fashion of a man,—becoming the character of one claiming to be regarded as a rational intelligence, having on his shoulders a thinking head, and within his bosom a living heart.

We sum up the argument, as far as it has gone, in a few words. Looking with something, as we think, like clear insight, at the great reality of human life; calculating the vast capabilities of the world we live in; noticing the texture of the raw material—within and without us—with which we have to work during our threescore years and ten; and observing what

may be done by Virtue, in relation to health, cheerfulness, success, society, and so on, not forgetting possible misfortune, and ordinary seasons of darkness and tears;—setting all this before us, we have come to a certain conclusion, and we have announced it. That conclusion is, that the apprehension of the unseen, the infinite, and the future, as revealed in the Christian revelation,—in other words, that religious faith,—with its supernatural motives and unworldly aims,—will best furnish you with that Virtue which most certainly secures the advantages of living,—and that it will best enable you to meet the evils incident to your lot. We thus think that in two ways you may be aided by the principle we inculcate. It may promote your *actually* making the best of life, by aiding you in working it into something uniformly beautiful; and, in addition to this, it may teach you to weave into graceful forms even its darkest and most ravelled threads.

PART IV.

OBJECTIONS AND REPLIES.

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SOME of you, I fear, are not satisfied. I fancy I can hear something like suppressed murmurs of opposition or incredulity. You had better speak out. *There,* —there are two persons rising to do so,—one having the aspect of a grave, religious man; the other looking like a wreck, with dejection in his air, and a brand upon his brow. I am quite willing to listen to both, and to do what I can to reply or to explain. May I ask the first what he wishes to interpose?

"I should be sorry to be thought captious or presuming, but I must honestly say, Sir, that I fear you are misleading these young men. I have listened to your statements and reasonings,—I hope I can say without prejudice,—and it does seem to me that you are likely to produce a very questionable impression, and may be giving to your audience somewhat false views both of religion and of life. Of your religious exposition I will not say much, though I lament to perceive a sort of vagueness and generality about your language anything but satisfactory; it may

prove, indeed, very deceptive; it is imperfect in the enunciation of great fundamental points; and leads me rather to doubt whether you properly hold to 'the Standards,' and are sound according to 'the Confession.' Without pressing that, however, I must say that you appear to me to have far too good an opinion both of the world and man. You put too much into man's own hands. You seem to think the world a very pleasant place, and talk about life being great and beautiful in a way, I confess, I have not been accustomed to. In my own mind, I certainly think you are in some things clearly wrong. You would encourage these young men to look forward to life with high hopes, as if it was something they were mightily to enjoy, instead of telling them what it really is,—preparing them for its bitter disappointments,—and teaching them that their constant duty will be, to despise its illusions, and to stand ready for leaving it. You seem to ignore, if I rightly comprehend you, the contempt with which Christians are to treat the world; how they are to be crucified to it, to despise it, to trample it under their feet; to remember that 'the fashion of it passeth away,' that life is short, that 'we brought nothing into the world and can carry nothing out,' that 'having food and raiment, we ought therewith to be content,'—sustained and satisfied with the hope and prospect of an inheritance in the skies. Besides this, you forget that *self-denial* is to distinguish Christians; that they are under the obligation of

going against nature, killing and 'mortifying' the flesh, 'putting off the body of sin,' 'pulling out their eyes,' and so on;—and also that religion often stands in the way of our worldly interests; that conscience will oblige a Christian man to do what others do not, and to forbear doing what others find profitable;—fidelity to God will sometimes involve the forfeiture of patronage or position, the loss of custom or income, with other secular evils; and, in extraordinary cases, may require submission to imprisonment or death. I don't see what Christians have to do with making the best of the world. 'He that is the friend of the world, is the enemy of God.' You would almost seem to intimate that we might live on very good terms with both! Is it really possible, then, after all, 'to serve God and Mammon?' We have high authority for disbelieving *that*. But I deny the statement that religious virtue is anything *like* uniformly successful in life. I demur to the fact. I have known many of the most 'excellent of the earth,'—humble, pious, unimpeachable men—who never could get on. Everything failed with them. No business they might touch or attempt, ever succeeded. As principals, their speculations always miscarried: even as servants, they never rose, or never high. No, no, Sir, the world is 'a valley of Achor,' a place of tears and graves,—especially to the righteous. 'Through much tribulation, we must enter the kingdom.'"

You have certainly succeeded, my good friend, in getting up a rather formidable indictment. I am not altogether surprised at it, however. I think some things that you have said very likely to occur to many minds; and though I am not confident of my ability to answer every objection, and to explain or remove all difficulties, I will honestly try to do what I can, and will thus give you such satisfaction as may be in my power.

So far as my religious system is concerned, I must repeat the request I had formerly to make in relation to my theory of virtue,—*wait*. You will perhaps find that we are more agreed than you at present suppose. I have had an object in view in using language rather general and comprehensive than strictly theological. By and by we may come to find ourselves side by side;—though, however you and I may substantially harmonize in our ideas, it is very probable that my forms of expression will not at any time be exactly such as to fall in with your accustomed and favourite phraseology. We shall not, however, I hope, quarrel about that. In the meantime, let me just say, in two words, that, exactly as I want religious faith for virtue to have a soul in it;—so I want the *Evangelical* element, that religious faith may have in it "spirit and life." The genealogy of the different parts of our theory, therefore, would stand thus:—the Evangelical form of Christian ideas,—best produces that religious faith,—which most efficiently sustains those virtues,—which,

by way of natural consequence, secure those things,—which contribute to the satisfaction and embellishment of life. Now, gentlemen, I think that a true theory, considered as such. As a speculation, I have reasoned it out, in my previous argument. But I now affirm, in answer to our friend here, that I believe it to be sufficiently supported *by facts* to justify all that I have urged and advocated. That is to say, I am to be understood as declaring my belief that, *as a general rule*, sincere and consistent Religious Virtue *actually does work beneficially for men in relation to the present world.* I believe that. I believe it, in spite of what may be thought to lie against it, on the ground of certain apparently opposing texts of Scripture, and of some seeming contradictory facts in life.

Perhaps our friend will allow me to begin what I have to say in reply to his objections and in support of my own belief, by asking him a question or two. May I? I may. Very well. Are you in business? "I can hardly say that I am now. I have been, and I still attend a little to it, but it is much more like play than work." You don't live at the shop, perhaps? "Oh dear no; I hav'n't for years. I live a little way out of town, and come in about four or five days out of the six." Do you drive into town? "Very seldom. I mostly take the omnibus: it calls for me every morning, whether I come or not. Sometimes I have the horse out, with the britska, but not often. My wife and girls mostly

use that. I don't care about it." You have wife and children then? "I am happy to say I have; and no man, I believe, was ever blessed with a better wife, or had more comfort and satisfaction in his children." Are they all at home with you? "No, not all of them. Some are married, and most satisfactorily. My eldest son is in the business; my second is at Cambridge. Two of my daughters are settled; one is the wife of a respectable solicitor, the other of a rising merchant in the City, and each has two or three lovely children. I quite went with you about that old man of yours. You were right there, I must say." You are of course a professor of religion; your words and manner showed that; you belong to some Christian church? "I have been a communicant in the same church for forty years. I had pious parents, though I lost them early. My father I never saw, but my mother lived till I left school; her image is the most precious of my memories. I was left alone in the world when only twelve, without brother or sister, or any near relative. But I can truly say, in the words of the Psalmist, that, 'when my father and my mother forsook me, the Lord took me up.' I came to London very young. I was placed where I experienced kindness; and I resolved by the help of God that I would do all in my power to give satisfaction. I was preserved from the follies and vices of youth; religion, too, got to be a habit and a life; I became a communicant; and I have retained that connexion

ever since." You are probably an office-bearer? "I am." An elder? "Something like it." I thought so. Thank you. That will do.

Now, gentlemen, I am very much obliged to our friend,—and you, I am sure, feel obliged too,—for the very candid manner in which he has answered my questions; and, indeed, for his permitting them to be put, and for his answering them at all. But he will pardon me, I hope, for saying, that he affords an illustration of a singular, though not perhaps very serious, inconsistency, frequently to be met with among religious people. They speak and think about the world and life, according to a certain class of Biblical expressions which they habitually hear; but you must not look to their own history or habits for a practical commentary on the text. Mind, they are not insincere, nor *consciously* inconsistent; they are perfectly upright in what they say;—but they fall, on some topics, into pious exaggerations, and without suspecting it, are very devoutly one-sided. Our friend, here, has not found the world a vale of tears, or anything like it, though he began life in a haze, or mist, from his original locality and from early sorrow. The sun soon broke out upon him, and he has had a long, bright day. He started well, and got on successfully. *He* never lost position or income on account of his religion. It was never difficult to him to keep a conscience, or to follow his convictions. His known habits rather, perhaps,

helped than hindered his advancement. He has had it appears, a steady rise in life. He got into business; things succeeded; he realized property; the burden of work is now completely off his mind—the results of his industry secure in the funds. He lives in some suburban retreat, at Clapham or Highgate; keeps a gig—and something more; has a good house filled and furnished from cellar to roof; sons starting in business where he leaves off, or preparing for entering the liberal professions; his daughters, I dare say, have been well educated, and are no doubt both virtuous and accomplished;—reading, probably some, of the continental languages in addition to their own. His mind is easy for the rest of his life. He can never more be painfully anxious about provision for the day that is passing over him, whatever he may have been;—for national bankruptcy is not near, and without that he cannot be reduced to fear or want. No ordinary event of Providence can affect him. I really don't think his crucifixion to the world can ever have been very agonizing; or that life has been to him nothing but a thing full of tears and trouble, from which he was constantly sighing to escape! He knows very well, and has often, I am sure, rejoiced in the thought, that the psalm he learnt when a boy,—the first he said to his mother,—is really neither more nor less than just the description of what one world has been to him, and what he hopes for the next.

"Goodness and mercy all my life
Have surely followed me;
And in the house of God, at last,
My dwelling place shall be."

I have no doubt it will. I have no doubt, either, but that he has lived with a sincere regard to his ultimate entrance into the upper world, though he has by no means been indifferent to making a good thing of this;—and he has succeeded too, both as to accumulation and enjoyment.

What, then, is the explanation of all this? How is it that religion does not teach people so to crucify themselves, as to make this life as wretched and miserable a thing as many of them say it is? or how is it, that they can *be* Christians,—and even elders and deacons,—if they don't?

The explanation, I think, is to be found in this: —that the Scriptures contain three or four classes of expressions descriptive of human life as seen under different aspects, and of experience and duty as related to different things, different properties in the same thing, different conditions of society, and different sets of circumstances; and that many good people do not sufficiently distinguish between these, and even exaggerate some of them while they lose sight of others. The consequence is, that they frequently fall into apparent contradiction and inconsistency, sometimes into serious practical mistakes. It is true, for instance, that the New Testament abounds with descriptions of the sufferings and

tribulations, the pains and perils to which Christians are exposed on account of their faith; what they have to endure for their reception of the Truth, their adherence to it, and their obedience to the dictates of duty and conscience; the utter impossibility, indeed, of *being* Christians, except on the understood law, that "whosoever will live godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution." It abounds, also, with strong statements about the pangs and agonies connected with "the crucifixion of the flesh;" the efforts required "to put to death" "the lusts" that live in it, and that refuse to die; the resistance to be maintained against things of which the individual "*has come to be ashamed;*" and the propriety of "yielding to righteousness and holiness," "the members that had been servants to uncleanness and iniquity." But then it also speaks of the peace and joys of the Divine life: how he that has it enters into rest; how his whole nature is stilled and tranquillized, and willingly obeys the principles and impulses of his better self. But the Old Testament, in addition to the inculcation of religious faith and godly fear, *dilates* on the tendency of the virtues they nourish to promote the worldly prosperity of the good man; and it describes how the blessing of God not only contributes to his comfort and contentment, but in many cases crowns him with opulence and honour. Now, I neither believe that there is any contradiction in all this, nor that Bacon gives us the right interpretation by saying, that "as prosperity

was the promise of the Old Testament, adversity is the promise of the New." That may seem at first like the voice of an oracle. On a hasty glance at what lies on the surface of the two Testaments, it may appear to announce the true principle to be applied to them respectively. For my part, however, I very much doubt this. I rather imagine we must go more deeply into the matter, and survey the whole subject in another light than what can flow to us from the point of a proverb, if we are to get a just idea of *the natural and designed relation of religion to the life of man in the present world.*

II.

I cannot do more, at present, than give you the outline of a short train of thought on this subject, and thus put you, as I think, on the right track. Let us begin, then, by supposing that the whole of society was thoroughly pervaded by the Christian element, and that all the pictures of the prophets were realized, which relate to the condition of *a perfectly righteous and religious age.* If all men,—all nations, neighbourhoods, and families, walked in the light,—lived according to the letter of the law and the spirit of the Gospel;—if all transactions and all conduct, in all the departments of adult life, were regulated by pure motives and just aims;—and if the rising generation was trained up "in the nurture

and admonition of the Lord," and by his gracious influence, gradually developed, from infancy and youth into holy and virtuous men and women; if this were the case, it is easy to see that there could not by possibility be, either any persecution or suffering on account of religion, or any great and fearful agony in putting off the old man, and crucifying him with his fleshly lusts; *for*, everything in society would be in favour of religious truth and religious virtue; and, in the individual, the flesh would never get to *be* a man needing to be struggled with in his robustness and vigour;—its growth would be prevented, it would be repressed while feeble, and would gradually give place to that nobler life which would be developed and confirmed through the quickening of man's better nature by heavenly influence, the Spirit of God descending like "the early dew" upon the soul, teaching the young heart to love holiness and to hate sin. Now, there is nothing extravagant in this supposition, because in every age there have been individuals who, as men, have been uniformly actuated by the aims and impulses of the religious life; and who, having "feared God from their youth,"—or even been, as He says it is possible to be, "sanctified from the womb,"—have been saved the agonies of self-crucifixion, by the early supremacy of inward principle, the culture of pure tastes, and the protecting hedge of virtuous habits. Of course, what has thus been a fact, again and again, in separate *individuals*, can be *conceived of* as being a fact in

society at large,—and might even *be* a fact. But, even on the supposition of the idea we have thrown out about the possible state of society being extravagant, it can still be entertained,—as any idea, however extravagant, may be entertained, when it is merely used for the purpose of illustrating a truth, and thus aiding the apprehension of an argument.

You will observe, then, as we have said, that on the supposition of a perfectly righteous and religious age, there would be no room for persecution or martyrdom, exposure to contempt, and sufferings and sacrifices of a worldly kind, on account of religion; nor in those brought up in the light and atmosphere of such an age, and gradually moulded into harmony with it, would there be any necessity for the anguish and death-struggles which are thought to belong to the self-denial required by Christianity. But now I want you next to notice that, in such an age, *the proper and natural operation of all the beneficent laws of God's government would come into full play*;—the tendency of all things to work out good for man, when they and he are in harmony with the Divine will,—all things natural, moral, social,—everything in the individual and in society,—whatever influences health, cheerfulness, reputation, and so on;—this tendency would come out,—it would be seen, everywhere and in all men. God's great idea,—what He constituted things *for*, and what that constitution is adapted to produce,

and *would* produce if it had free scope and unimpeded action,—this would be embodied in a universal, palpable, and patent *fact*.

When, however, on the other hand, God's truth, religious faith, and religious virtue exist in but few minds, in the midst of an idolatrous, wicked, corrupt, and scoffing age,—and when these "few" have to face the world, to testify against it, to stigmatize and rebuke it, and to seek to make converts from its mass of adult, ignorant brutality, its philosophic indifference, its refined and accomplished sensualism, of course they will do this at their peril, the peril of everything, and they must be content with heroic suffering and the hope of the future, instead of the enjoyment of anything like a happy and prosperous earthly life. In proportion, too, as they succeed in depositing the elements of light and purity in proud minds and sensual hearts, in stirring and agitating what may have long been dormant, and in inviting to duty those who have been habituated to the free licence of the flesh and the devil;—why, there will be the beginning of conflict and battle, and sore agony;—the necessity for self-conquest and self-crucifixion, and the resistance to lusts, and the wrenching of habits, with other things of like nature, which the most vigorous language of earth, and the most prolific imagination of man, will hardly be able to find words and figures adequately to describe. Still further. In proportion as this state of things is *approached* in *any* age,—in proportion as the

adherents of truth and holiness are a minority, "in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation," —in proportion as they have to stand out as "witnesses for God" in opposition to authority, habit, or opinion,—in that proportion they will be exposed to something partaking of the nature of persecution, in principle or form, similar to that endured by their predecessors. In proportion, too, as strong natural tendencies to evil are not early eradicated or subdued by good training and God's grace,—or as individuals give way to impulse and temptation, and contract tyrannous habits of sin, and in proportion as any such "awake up to the will of God," and have to struggle to attain the liberty and purity of a holy life,—there will be for them battle, and self-denial, and crucifixion of the flesh, in forms very severe;—sometimes needing to be long-continued, and often becoming what can only be depicted by the strongest terms and most vivid figures which language affords or Scripture consecrates.

But while all this is true, it is also true that in proportion as *any portion of society* is pervaded by the Christian element, and in proportion *as an individual lives, and moves, and has his being within it,* in that proportion will his being religious fall in with the public opinion of his sphere of life, and he, of course, escape anything like suffering or persecution on account of it. In proportion, also, as an individual has been well trained, becoming early the subject of good principles and virtuous aspirations,—

"remembering his Creator in the days of his youth," yielding himself to holy influences, imbibing a spirit of firm and devoted loyalty to duty, cultivating correct and pure tastes, and so *practically* carrying out the idea of obedience, that obedience itself becomes early a fixed habit, and gets strengthened and confirmed every day,—why, in that proportion will self-denial become less and less, till, instead of its being painful to him to resist evil, it will be painful to approach it,—difficult, or impossible for sin, in any gross or obvious form, so to present itself as to become a temptation. And further. In proportion as these two things meet together in the history of a man,—he being early what we have described, and his circle of society being what we have described,—in that proportion will this man be saved both from anything like external suffering on account of his religion, and from internal battle because of his virtue. Within his sphere of religious society, and through his personal possession of trained holiness, he will witness in others, and experience in himself, the benign and favourable working on human affairs of *that constitution of things*, which, in a perfectly righteous and religious age, would work benignly and favourably for the whole body.

But this, we maintain, *is very much the case now, with large numbers of those who constitute the religious classes.* The best of every Church—the most steady, solid, symmetrical characters, the most useful and reliable men,—are generally those who have been

brought up, trained and moulded from the first, under religious influence. Men these, who were never *practically* vicious or immoral; who were early discipled to the Lord, and early disciplined in the Church—especially "the Church in the house;" and who,—however comparatively late it might be before some of them stood forth active and earnest as Christian men,—were always kept from gross habits and great transgressions. Here and there some prominent individual may be one who was formerly profane or profligate, but in general the leaders in all our great religious societies are men of a different stamp. You would find, if you knew them, that they mostly commenced their religious career *as young men;* that they early decided, by voluntary preference, to remain in the way in which they had been led; that they were quickened and drawn by heavenly influences, and were "not disobedient" to the Divine impulse; that they prayed *"to be kept from evil, that it might not grieve them,"* and were "heard in respect to the thing they feared." They *were* kept from it. Their "steps were ordered of the Lord;" they "also did no iniquity, and walked with Him in the way;" they were thus preserved from ever knowing anything about *getting* into it like a shipwrecked sailor, who, weak, naked, exhausted, has to struggle through breakers that, ever and anon, would draw him back again to the perils he would escape. Now, so far as making something valuable of the present life depends upon ourselves, *such men* are the men to do

it;—for the laws of Providence not being obstructed in their direct and natural course by physical, moral, or social transgressions, generally work pretty much in their favour. They seldom know anything about persecution from without,—and not much either about agony and crucifixion in putting off the old man. The society they move in prevents the first,—their own early habits and character the second. As to finding life an intolerable burden, and thinking of nothing but getting away from a wretched, miserable, waste-howling-wilderness-of-a-world,—it's all a mistake! Instead of this, "the voice of rejoicing is in the habitation of the righteous." You may hear them thanking God that "the lines have fallen to them in pleasant places, and that they have a goodly heritage." They are generally substantial, comfortable, well-to-do sort of men. One will say,—"Thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over:" another will reply,—"I have been young and now am old, but never have I seen the righteous forsaken, or his seed begging bread:" and then they and theirs will unite together in an anthem like this:—"Thou art our God, and we will bless thee; *our fathers' God*, and we will praise thee:" "Thou shalt guide us by thy counsels." "Thy statutes are our delight and song." "Thou hast brought us also into a wealthy place." "This God is our God for ever and ever; He will be our guide even unto death."

III.

Here, you will be so good as notice, how the right understanding of the relation between the Old and New Testaments will help to commend to you, and I hope, to confirm, this theory of the religious life. For the sake of easy apprehension, I don't mind putting the matter before you in the way of making out a sort of analogy between the two great divisions of the Divine word,—without asserting, however, that the idea is anything more than a suggested aid, to promote the vivid perception of the truth.

In the Old Testament, then, you have the temporal redemption of the people from Egypt, the preaching of a National Evangel by Moses, the foundation laid and the plan given of a religious polity;—and then you have the account of battle and war, long years of confusion and disorder, in which nothing goes on calmly or naturally;—till at last you get the tribes settled and adjusted;—ultimately a compact, regular commonwealth developed, with its established government, and its different orders attending to their respective secular pursuits,—in connexion with a Divine economy of religion, intended for the support and nourishment of virtue on the ground of *faith*. The *formative* period, so to call it, of the Jewish nation and church—the period of Joshua, the Judges, and the first years of the monarchy, is one of conflict, suffering, controversy, persecution:—*controversy,* in which swords and spears are the arguments and

syllogisms;—a rough sort of logic, and not very speedy or successful either; *persecution*, in the sense of being under the Philistines or other adversaries; the people having no security for the enjoyment of anything; liable to lose, at any moment, the results of their labour by the forcible seizure of the product of their fields, farms, and vineyards;—thus being deprived, so to speak, of *the opportunity* of experiencing the beneficial working of natural laws,—for, just in proportion as they are faithful to duty and to God, they must be ready to sacrifice their lives in battle, or to take willingly the loss of their liberty and the "spoiling of their goods." When, however, things get settled down, and God's great providential system has its proper action; then, we have developed and set before us, the spiritually happy, devout man of the book of Psalms,—and the prosperous, virtuous man of the book of Proverbs. The Prophets, too, simply considered as preachers,—which they were to their own times, though they had a function also bearing on the future,—the Prophets are constantly admonishing their hearers, just to live religiously and virtuously, according to their light and privileges as the people of God, and they are assured that, according to the laws of the moral system that overshadows and surrounds them, they will find that it is "*well with the righteous*, for *they shall eat the fruit of their doings*," and "*ill with the wicked*, for *the reward of his hands shall be given him*." That is to say, God's original idea, in relation to the world and

man, would on the whole get worked out; events would fall into a natural course; moral virtue being developed through religion, it would be seen, that while Revelation and the Church facilitated the culture of the virtue, the virtue itself, by way of natural consequence, became to its possessors health and wealth, safety and honour. In proportion as any age is corrupt in itself, or exposed to foreign idolatrous invaders, it has to suffer and to fight, and to reap the fruits of a condition of disorder;—a condition in which of course it may go badly with the best; for, in such times, the innocent have to submit to suffer with the guilty, and the virtuous and patriotic from the very fact of their virtue and patriotism. Such, however, are not left without appropriate compensations; while, in proportion as society approaches the character of a righteous and religious age, it is always promised, or represented as enjoying, the happy results of God's beneficent constitution of things. The famished, fighting, rude, restless, suffering man of the times of Judges and similar periods, gives place to the staid, quiet, "douce," orderly burgher of the book of Proverbs,—who is regular in his attendance at the Temple, diligent in his business, prosperous in his affairs, of repute among the elders, with daughters doing virtuously, and a wife that has his house decked with "coverings of tapestry," while "her own clothing is silk and purple."

Now, in the New Testament you have the history

of that which was the "crisis" not of a nation, but a world; the revealed fact of a spiritual redemption accomplished for humanity; you have the unveiling of the last and highest form of heavenly truth,—with the calling of men to the exercise of the most earnest and vigorous religious faith; and you have the idea and commencement of ecclesiastical institutions, which are intended for society, the world over. You don't really get, however, in the Epistles,—looking at their relation to all time,—beyond general principles, and sketches and germs of things which these principles are intended to govern. To the last, almost, you are amid battles and controversy, suffering and persecution, struggle and sacrifice, with all the other phenomena of a fighting and formative age, in which order is contending with confusion, and what is true and spiritual grapples with the contrary, trying to subdue the world and shape it into something that shall bring it at last into full harmony with the established principles and primary laws of the Divine government. The object of the Gospel is to bring all men to the knowledge of God, "through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus;" to leaven universal society with religion and righteousness; to unite men together in one spirit—though, it may be, under different forms of social organization—as worshippers or churches; so that, altogether, through the influence of spiritual faith constantly nourished by devout habits, "all holy conversation and godliness" may everywhere prevail,

nations be bound together in peace and concord, and every individual, in every sphere and department of life, embody in himself the reality and the results of loyalty to God. In proportion, then, as this design of Christianity is accomplished, however imperfectly, in any people,—or *in any class or section of a people,* —so that its spirit and habits constitute the spring and power, the form and utterance of their moral life,—in that proportion will there be developed amongst them, not only the devout, spiritual religionist of the Old Testament, with his inward vicissitudes, showers and sunshine, gradually advancing to "perfect day,"—but its worthy, consistent, upright, and prosperous man of the world too,—who is never consciously anything else but a student of the statutes, and a doer of the commandments of God. In respect to such, things for the most part will take their natural course. The moral constitution and laws of the universe will reach their end and manifest their design. When not impeded, they will work out good to the true and faithful; so that, under the predominance of the Christian element, in the individual and in society, it will come to be seen, in perfect consistency with the old Hebrew experience, that "godliness is profitable for all things, *having the promise of the life that now is,* as well as of that which is to come." Thus, the proper place for the Psalms and Proverbs, and for the Prophets too, so far as they were the teachers and reprovers of the people—the proper place for them, in the natural

history of the Christian life, is *after* the Epistles,—*after* the apprehension of those objects of faith, which the Gospel reveals as its message to humanity. When, under the influence of religious principle, as formed and vivified by Christian ideas, any community of men, "denying ungodliness and worldly lusts," shall "live soberly, righteously, and godly in the world," they will be brought into coincidence with the circumstances and condition of the pious and upright of the former economy. *They* were assured, that the natural effect of providential order was—*good to the good,*—and they realized in themselves the fulness of the promise. The same law holds still. The Gospel did not come to alter *that.* "Heaven and earth may pass away, but one jot or one tittle" of God's divine system of "law" and order "shall not pass away." Christianity, by diviner influences and stronger motives than were known before, is designed to bring man into practical harmony with the unabrogated constitution of God's universe, that it may yield to him here, as well as hereafter, what it always will yield whenever its required conditions are fulfilled.

IV.

All this, you will observe, is fully borne out by the experience of our friend here. His young soul was cradled and nursed by maternal piety. By God's grace it received impressions from those looks and

lips—and derived advantage from those prayers and tears, which nothing subsequently was permitted to destroy. He grew up like Timothy; the faith that had "dwelt in his grandmother Lois, and his mother Eunice" soon appeared "to be in him also." He was early recognised as a communicant in the Church. He was always in contact with God-fearing men. He lived with such; served them; was noticed by them; married among them; moved in the midst of them as one of themselves. He never had to endure any great tribulations for his religion; and as to the terrible self-denial he talks about, I suspect he never knew very much about that,—at least not in the sense of "putting off the body of sin," and "pulling out eyes," and "cutting off hands," and so on;—not because he had not as much original corruption in him as any one else, but because that was taken at an advantage—repressed and overcome in its incipient impulses; he was never under the "*dominion*" of evil, of passion and appetite, so as to contract such *habits* of sin that, to get rid of them, "when he came to himself," was like flaying him alive,—tearing the skin off the flesh, and the flesh off the bones. No such thing. He had tastes and principles from the first, which preserved him from all this. "He never even sat with vain persons; neither did he go in with dissemblers." "He washed his hands in innocency;" and "was kept back from presumptuous sins." Things which would have been invincible temptations to others, were none to him; they rather excited loathing and

horror. He was once, perhaps, induced, without knowing what he was about, to go into the saloon of a theatre; its waving mosaic of impudence and shame only shocked him, and he fled from it with a feeling of terror and disgust. I don't at all believe in the exaggerated notions of the suffering and self-denial required by virtue,—in the case of those, I mean, who are well trained, and who early become the subjects of religious faith and good habits. To such, the self-denial soon comes to be the other way. And so, in fact, it really *is*, at last, with the wicked themselves. Do not suppose that this is a mere quibble, or a play upon the word. I tell you, if you want to see self-denial, you may find that in the most terrible form, where, separate from the virtuous, stand the vicious and the profligate. Their *moral* nature is as much a part of themselves as their senses and appetites; and if they choose to please and pamper the one, they must rigidly deny themselves the pleasures of the other. They must give up, therefore, all the satisfactions of the conscience,—all that would spring from the gratification of their moral and religious sensibilities. And there is this difference, for you, young men, to observe and remember, between the two kinds of self-denial practised by the virtuous and the vicious respectively. The virtuous man denies that part of his nature which, once overcome, ceases to disturb; it gradually retires from the unequal contest, when it is made to feel that it is carried on in serious earnest; in a great

measure it *dies,* and cannot easily have a resurrection: and this, mark, is effected by the man's preferring satisfactions which continue to please the longer they are enjoyed,—the acuteness of the feelings and the perception of delight increasing with indulgence, repetition, and years. The vicious man has to overcome what may certainly be silenced, and for a time, indeed, even appear to be dead and buried, —but what is always liable to wake up again into new life, and to come forth intent on its revenge: and he does this, from the preference of satisfactions the very tendency of which is to cloy and surfeit: which cease to please the more they are indulged; which continue to be demanded with increased appetite in proportion as they lose their power to satisfy; —the man, all the time, heaping on his moral nature, by those very acts which have come rather to disgust than delight, what lies there, like so much pitch and bitumen, which a single spark of spiritual thought may at any moment light into a flame. *Then* will there be laid bare, in the midst of the burning, all those moral sensibilities which had seemed dead,—but which can thus assert their indestructible life, and that, too, with an increased and almost supernatural acuteness of feeling. Yes;—*that's* self-denial for you! The *best* part of your nature crucified;—there's no crucifixion like that! Now our friend here, not only can know nothing of this; but he never knew anything like a terrible death-struggle in getting the mastery over his worser self. The thing

was done, by God's help, when he was a *young man;* and having once got the upper hand, he kept it. Casting in his lot with the pious, and associating himself with the good, he was surrounded by influences which were all in his favour. His way in the world gradually opened; and he went in, and gave himself to the work he found there, like a steady, industrious, good man;—the fear of God keeping his heart, his "integrity and uprightness" strengthening his hands. And so things went well with him. He walked in his house with the warm devotion of the Psalms in his soul; and in society with the morality of the Proverbs in his conduct. The result is, that he has found life to be very pleasant, and the world a tolerably good thing,—in spite of his sometimes talking about both in phrases which he sincerely thinks must be right because he has so often heard them from the "minister," but which his own experience, left to itself, would not naturally prompt him to employ.

V.

I do steadily maintain, then, that what we drew out as a theory, and pursued as an argument, is sustained by *facts*—facts standing there, before our eyes, in the visible Church of the living God. Religion *does*, as a general rule, produce those virtues and induce that conduct, which, by way of natural consequence, work the stuff that life is made of into something happy and prosperous. The pious, excel-

lent, philanthropic men, who are the strength and stay of our religious institutions, I have already told you, are men of this sort. They have, for the most part, sprung from the Church itself. They were in it, and of it, as *young men*. But they have all along, also, had to live and work in the world;—and many of them have done so with eminent success. They are living in the enjoyment of all that is comfortable,—*some* in much that is elegant and splendid. And there's no harm in this;—no inconsistency with Christian principle. "To provide things honest," or *becoming*, "in the sight of all men," is just for a man so to live in society, as not to excite remark either by one extreme or another. His house, appointments, habitual expenses, are all to be such as are suitable to his property and rank, according to what is customary with his class, and furnished by the improvements of the particular age in which he lives. He is not to be ostentatious, and to draw observation by show and expense; but neither is he to be mean and sordid, or unnecessarily singular, especially to such an extent that none can visit him with satisfaction or sympathy. It is not required that Christian men should either throw all their money into a common stock,—or that they should do nothing with it but give it away,—or that they should reject the comforts or elegances suitable to their fortune. The sudden outburst of Pentecostal communism did not last long,—nor work very well either. There were particular circumstances which

led to it, and temporary ends to be answered by it; but it is not, and was not designed to be, a model for us. We find the rich, as well as the poor, afterwards in the Church. They are not commanded either to *cease* to be rich, by giving up every thing to the Church-fund,—nor to cease to be *known* to be rich, by abandoning whatever distinguished and indicated their position,—but only "not to *trust* in their riches," and to "do good, and to be ready to communicate" in proportion to their property, as good and faithful stewards of God. I quite believe in the propriety of the rich *giving largely and nobly* to great public objects: but it is not necessary, and would not be wise, for them to do nothing else with their money. There are other ways "to do good, and to communicate," besides this. It is as much the duty of those that have money *to spend it*, as it is of those that have none to try to get some; and it is better for the latter to be employed by the former, and thus to earn what they receive, than to receive it for nothing. It is not required that men, in our age of the world, and in our condition of society, should confine their expenditure, and conform their habits, to what was customary at a previous period; and there is no reason on earth why *Christian* men, when opulent and prosperous, should be required to do this, or thought to be luxurious and worldly if they don't.

Because once there were no carpets, nor curtains, nor rosewood chairs, nor beautiful engravings, to be seen in the houses of certain classes, (or further back,

indeed, of *any*,) that is no reason why it should be thought wrong to have them now. Because a deal table may serve the purposes of a table as well as a mahogany one, that is no reason why a religious man should have nothing but deal. There is no virtue in sticking to iron, if a man can afford to have something better. There was once only one woman in the whole realm of England, that had a silver fork, or a pair of silk stockings. Is everybody to go back, then, to the time of Queen Elizabeth, and none to think of having or using what was once so peculiarly *hers?* Why, the fact is, that the improvements in manufactures have put comforts and elegances within the reach of shop-keepers, mechanics, and servant-maids, which your gentlemen and ladies formerly never dreamt of. There is no harm in our wives or daughters having two or three silk gowns in wear at once, if our means permit it, though their great-grandmothers might have been content with one for their life-time. In the same way improvements in the elegant and imitative arts bring many things within the reach of the middle classes, which would not have been thought of, and could not once have been secured by the higher. But the laws that regulate all these things embrace *society as a whole,* and there is no necessity for Christians, as such, to imagine that they are to live below or beyond them. They might as well, in some respects, decline using the railways. If God "gives a man power to get wealth," in this nineteenth century of ours, in which

materials are cheapened, and, when beautifully wrought into various objects of use or ornament, come, in these forms, so within the reach of numbers as to be general and customary possessions,—why, the man in question, however spiritual or devout he may be, need not be supposed to do wrong by availing himself of the advantages of the day he lives in. If he can keep a carriage,—*let* him keep it; and let him *call* it a carriage, and not attempt to sophisticate his soul by describing it with the Quaker as only "a leathern convenience." The great thing is, for the Christian to be able to justify himself to his own conscience and before God. If he is just and considerate to private claims and poor connexions, and if he does fully and fairly, in direct, public benevolence, what is proportioned to his possessions, he will get no harm, and should not be thought to sin, by surrounding himself with what is customary in his class. The more familiar the man is with many of these things—the commoner they are to him—the less he will think about them, or feel that they nourish any dangerous affection; while at the same time, the atmosphere they create, may insensibly, and, in many ways, operate upon him for good rather than evil. Facts, I believe, to those who can see them in the right light, are existing around us, in the circumstances and condition of many good men conspicuous in the religious world, which sustain and illustrate all that I have advanced. They made their way by virtue:—virtue nourished by religion.

They have in their hands the means of embellishing life;—and they embellish it. And no one who knows them, either questions their Christianity, or believes it to be injured by their use of what has come to them by *His* blessing, "who giveth them all things richly to enjoy."

VI.

I thus keep to what I have advanced—that we have ample proof, in the form of facts existing around us, that, as a general rule, religion does, on the whole, work favourably for man in the present world. I hold to this,—in spite of much that might seem to militate against it. With a brief allusion to some of these exceptional cases, I shall bring to a close this part of the argument.

I hold to the statement, then, in spite of the necessity at particular periods (as I before explained to you), and of what to some may be a necessity at any period, *of persons having to lose everything on account of their religious convictions.* In such cases, of course, this world must be given up. Property, prospects, position, liberty, life—all are parted with. Such persons are called to "a baptism of blood;" they have to suffer, that others may be benefited; they fall in the contest with what runs counter to the will of God and the happiness of man; but in doing so, while they maintain their integrity at the expense of their happiness, they hasten for the world the

coming of that state of things in which it shall be possible to unite the consciousness of the one with the possession of the other. Even in such cases, therefore, more, in actual personal satisfaction, may be got by the sacrifice than could be secured without it. From the state of their minds, it would be the worst sort of suicide for martyrs to act otherwise than they do—the suicide of their moral and spiritual nature. "He who would save his life, shall lose it." In respect, then, to their lot in "the life that now is," it would be worse for the persecuted if, instead of being buried in a dungeon, or branded in the pillory, or stripped of their possessions, or hanged, or burnt, they consented to live, though surrounded with all the appliances of earth, at the expense of their fidelity to themselves, to truth, to society, and to God. I admit that they cannot make the best of this world as the sphere of ordinary human satisfactions; they renounce the idea entirely; they have to live despised, and to die dishonoured; but "none of these things move them;" they have internal resources of adequate *compensation,* not only in the hope of future reward, but in the luxury of their present experience,—"for as their sufferings abound, so do their consolations also abound in Christ."

I hold to the statement, too, *in spite of the errors and exaggerations into which many have fallen at different times, in respect to the nature of the religious life, and the higher forms of Divine virtue.* Spiritual perfection has been supposed to be attained by

stripping existence of every thing adapted to beautify and embellish it;—by fleeing to the desert; retiring into caverns; living on the top of a column or a rock; renouncing society, ordinary food, comfortable apparel; by encouraging on the person the accumulation of filth, the breed of vermin, the growth of disgusting, putrid sores! Under the idea of being prepared for places of honour in the next state, men have taxed their ingenuity to deform, and darken, and desolate this. Nature has been outraged, reason dethroned, and the nastiest beasts on the face of the earth venerated and worshipped, as if the most meritorious virtue in man, and the most beautiful sight to the eye of God, were to be found in some dirty wretch, who in hair-shirt, lice, and filth, affronted his Maker by frowning on his gifts, and did all he could to prove that the laws of the world were wrong. In spite, too, of milder forms of asceticism, we hold to our belief;—in spite of convents and monasteries; the giving of immense property to the Church; the renouncing of the world—in the sense of literally retiring from it—by the innocent and the young; the attaching of the notion of a higher virtue to celibacy than to marriage; incessant fastings; physical flagellation; with all the other matters of prohibition and command, by which exalted spiritual attainments are said to be secured; said,—by those who thus at once prove the truth of the Bible, and their own direct opposition to its spirit. "In the latter days some shall

depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils [or doctrines touching the worship of the dead]. Speaking lies in hypocrisy. Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth. For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused." "Let no man beguile you . . . . in a voluntary humility . . . . vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind . . . . [commanding you to] touch not, taste not, handle not. Which things have indeed a show of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body, but only to a dishonourable satisfying of the flesh." "Bodily exercise [physical suffering] profiteth little; but *godliness is profitable unto all things,* having promise *of the life that now is,* and of that which is to come. *This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation;* for . . . . the living God is the Saviour of all men—[their beneficent Preserver and Friend, providing for and delighting in their happiness]—*specially of those that believe.*"

We are not shaken either by still milder forms of mistake among ourselves. We have known cases in which, under great religious excitement, men have given up respectable and lucrative positions to become home missionaries, or preachers of some sort or other. Very great sacrifices have thus been made, and made apparently for religion;—but then they were neither wise nor necessary, and the consequences

came to be anything but conducive to the comfort, reputation, or usefulness of the parties. Religious faith, in such instances, is not to be regarded as the cause of those years of mortification, bitter disappointment, and burning shame, which really sprang from error of judgment, weakness of understanding, temporary enthusiasm, or—something worse. Voluntary martyrdom, unrequired sacrifices, "running without being sent," playing the hero, when your proper part is just quietly "to abide in your calling," and to do, there, such duties as God has made yours, —these things often bring misery and wretchedness to those whom they seduce, and disgrace on religion, which *seems* to be the thing that leads them astray. The blame should fall, however, on the men themselves, not upon that whose objects and impulses they misinterpret. In the same way, very excellent religious people, in order "not to be conformed to the world," have been known to get rid of their plate and pictures, to pull down their parlour and drawing-room curtains, to take up their carpets, transform their furniture from whatever was elegant into anything that could be got that was mean and poor; and instead of dressing in a way suitable to their rank, have so arrayed themselves as to look like labourers or servant-maids. Such extremes never last,—as extremes of any kind seldom do. There is often a painful and melancholy reaction, that does more harm than the previous extravagance. I don't believe that religion should be charged with the one

thing more than the other. It does not require that its subjects, to be true to *it*, should be false to their providential positions in society. Not being conformed to the world, consists in the state of the affections,—in the little that is thought of anything that belongs to it, or that belongs to the embellishment of the station we hold in it,—far more than in literally rejecting the customary external appendations of that station, and in getting talked of as having made ourselves into perfect "Guys." I remember a man who thought it sinful conformity to the world to use a tooth-brush!—it was "walking in a vain show," and bestowing more than was meet on what belonged to a poor perishing body! I knew another who wore his hair combed straight over his forehead, like what you see in the portraits of William Huntington;—I remember that man insisting that to throw the hair off the brow, or to put it back, was "fighting against God,"—for that while *He* wanted it to go one way, the individual resisted, and would have it go another! Religion is not to be charged with being the parent of either of these absurdities, any more than of those graver offences before noticed,—the most monstrous of which might almost be regarded as only the full development of the *principle* that lay at the root of my two examples of Protestant asceticism.

In like manner, I think that religion should not be charged *with the blundering, and failure, and want of success of those good men whom our friend referred*

to. He has known, it seems, many of the "excellent of the earth" that never got on; never succeeded as masters, and never rose very high as servants. So have I. But the religion of the men did not hinder them. I have known such in positions where, other things being equal, it would have weighed in their favour, and done them service. The fact is, the sort of men referred to are generally such as, whether they have religion or not, will never succeed in anything. They are slow, dull, well-meaning men. Heavy, rather, at both ends—head and feet alike acting as if weighed down by something that impeded them. They want tact, perspicacity, vigour, ambition. They look at things as if their eyes were made of glass;—they lay hold of them as if they had no fingers on their hands. They can't be looked to, when a thing presses, to get through it with cleverness and dexterity. They will lose the post because they cannot write without mending their pen;—and they will go leisurely, too, about the operation,—though the very sight of the thing will vex and irritate those who are longing to see the boy off with the letter. These sort of men may be very good, very pious. I quite believe it. I don't doubt that. But it's all nonsense attributing their want of advance and success in life *to their religion.* They are true, worthy, conscientious; they are spiritual, holy, excellent men; but they are not fitted for getting on, in the highest form of the thing or the largest meaning of the phrase. They do best as servants;—with their

duties defined, their powers directed, and their salary secure. They cannot be trusted to be employers and principals,—having plans to form, and speculations to enter into, and modes of action to choose or to originate. They are sure to fail in all that. But they would have done so, had they been as destitute of religion as they are of ability. The fact is, that religion, as regenerating, sanctifying, and making a man into "a new creature," does not make him into a different natural man from what he was before—though it makes him into a *spiritual* one by the infusion of a Divine principle of life. As a man, he will be morally improved and elevated, but he will not be different—in talent, genius, or original aptitude—from what he previously was. He will be a better but not a cleverer man. It is to be observed, therefore, that the excellent unsuccessful men of our friend here, are, for the most part, such, because of their natural destitution of some one or more of those attributes of mind and character on which success depends; and that they are indebted to their religion, not for having done so badly, *but for not having done a great deal worse.* It is not the source of what is defective in them, but of what is good. Without religion, they might have been dishonest and immoral as well as stupid. So that, you see, balancing natural defect by spiritual principle, it is religion, after all, that helps them to get on as well as they do. They pass through the world worthy, reputable people, filling with honour subordinate positions in

the great household of humanity,—whereas, had they not had religion to quicken and ennoble them as men of God, they might have been so dragged downwards by the sluggishness of nature, as to deserve turning into the streets as dishonest and unfaithful, to wander and starve like ejected vagabonds.

VII.

In closing this reply to my friendly objector, let me guard myself against being misconceived. I do not deny, you will understand, either the reality or the duty of self-denial as a Christian virtue; nor that every Christian has a great battle to fight, a severe and earnest struggle to maintain, in order to his keeping the masterhood of himself, or enjoying the consciousness of being a consistent, religious man. I believe in occasional religious fasting, and in other forms of "keeping under the body." I am no apologist for spending life in a course of snug, quiet, respectable animalism. But I mean to say this,—that, just as worldliness does not consist in "using" the world as we pass through it, but in making it *our end*;—so superstition does not consist in using means for repressing the flesh and advancing goodness, but in making these means *ends*,—attributing virtue to their mere observance, and thus getting on to attribute superior virtue to their excess. There is always a departure from the true spirit of the Christian life, when importance is

attached to forms and means, as if they were at once substance and end; and when the idea of excellence gets transferred from the spiritual attainment itself, to the outward sign or profession of pursuing it. This has been the source of those enormous absurdities, which in every age have more or less deformed the Church. It is a thing so utterly bad, that it has not only been outwardly mischievous, by leading the simple into mistake and error, but it has fostered beneath the show of the most sordid asceticism, a spirit as proud, worldly, and ostentatious as ever lived in familiarity with palaces and purple. As connected with the *preservation* of the Divine life, every wise man will watch daily over the state of his heart, will seek to have "his affections *set* upon the things that are above, not on those on the earth," and will in all things practise habitual moderation;—while, for the culture and *advancement* of what is spiritual, he may occasionally employ acts of self-mortification and studied abstinence. He will know, however, how to regard these and all such things as means, and means only; and he will remember how they, and exercises of like nature, change their character and miss their aim, when done with parade or valued for themselves. There is wonderful wisdom in the words of the Master, telling us, "if we fast," "to wash our face and anoint our head," and to look in society just like our fellows, that it may "not appear to men" what we are doing. In the same spirit, He warns us against alms-deeds being set forth with the sound

of a trumpet, and commands us to offer our *personal* devotions, not so "as to be seen of men," "in the synagogue or in the streets," but in the secret retirement of our own chambers. Many of the "saints" of the desert and the dunghill, in spite of their professed renunciation of the world, would have been greatly disappointed if they had not been noticed, admired, and talked about. There are some people, even now, who would not support a school, if the children were not to be all dressed alike;—as there are others that cannot say their prayers without disturbing a neighbourhood by the tolling of bells every morning at eight o'clock. A wise, humble, religious man will attend to the concerns of his spiritual life, without seeking to attract attention either by his alms, his prayers, or his austerities. He may live very much like other men,—and look very much like them too. He may not "disfigure his face," or "be of sad countenance." The world for him may have glow and brightness as well as for others; he may mingle among men in proper apparel and with "anointed head;" and yet, all the time, there may be *internal* battle, and habitual, conscious, *designed* effort, to be and to do *that which he ought* "as in the sight of God." Religion, in its acts and exercises, is not to be the sole business of any man—or woman either. It is intended to make all business, and every form of life, *religious*. And, if it does this, then, *as a general rule*, business will succeed, and life will be beautiful.

But there was another individual who stood up at the same time with our friend, wishing, apparently, to interpose something. If he be still here, and still in the same mind, I can now listen to what he has to say.

"I don't know that I have very much to say;—or, rather, I don't know that I *can* say, or can trust myself to say, all that at this moment I feel. What I rose to object, has certainly not been met by the long discourse you have just concluded. Indeed, you have rather added to my original dissatisfaction. I rose, Sir, for the purpose of *beseeching* you to bestow some little thought on the miserable and wretched, and not to go on aggravating our wretchedness by talking about the world and life in a way which really sounds like an insult, and which, instead of being heard with anything like sympathy, is felt and resented with inward exasperation. But I have no hope now. Your Gospel—if you have one—appears to be intended, not for the poor, but for the rich; not for rags, toil, misery, remorse, but for the fortunate and the prosperous;—for people in easy or affluent circumstances,—ladies and gentlemen in elegant dresses and kid gloves! It's all very well talking about—'*if* a man has this, and *if* he does that; *if* he begins life thus, and *if* he advances so; that, *then*, such and such results may be looked for!' You seem to forget, Sir, how many have to start *without your conditions*. You have nothing to

say, it appears, to the masses and the multitude! Did you never hear that there are myriads in the world who have to go through it, from beginning to end, earning their bread with the sweat of their brow,—who know nothing of anything but work—work—everlasting work? How would you like to toil as so many have to toil, in mines and brickfields, glass-houses and dockyards, mills and manufactories? Did you never read 'The Song of the Shirt?' Were you never present at a meeting of mechanics, strong-headed, hard-handed, intelligent operatives,—skilled labourers, who read and reason, and utter, on occasion, eloquent speech, and who yet never can rise above the condition of working men? *Greatness* and *beauty* of life, indeed! It's all cant. Why, the world is full of the oppressed and the wretched, the ruined and the lost. I can see nothing in it but misery and injustice, tyranny and wrong. It may suit people in good health,—prudent, robust, fortunate people,—who have always been placed in favourable circumstances, and have had no difficulty in getting on,—it may suit such to sit and listen to a lecture about 'rise' and 'success,' and all that; but I want to know what you have to say to the feeble and infirm, the incapable and unfortunate, the ignorant, the injured, the bereaved, the sorrow-stricken, the ruined,—in short, to the ten thousand forms and species of misery that fill the world! Beauty! *Greatness!* As if such words could really be appropriate to a life like

ours! Is there anything great in a thinking, godlike man, with an immortal soul in him, spending all his days in making needles' eyes, or pins, or in filing iron, or grinding glass, or spinning cotton, or building up brick walls, or sawing wood or stone, or selling ribbons, or cheese, or candles? What sublimity is there about a carcase-butcher, or a tripeman, or a costermonger's barrow, or a chandler's shop, or even in any of the higher forms of your poor, sordid buying and selling? Greatness! *Beauty!* The beauty of this and the other *law* that you talk about! Is there any 'law' more general than that of mortality? Look at *death;*—death, not as in the case of your poetical fiction of a contented and happy old man, but as the death of the young, the beautiful, the accomplished; the bride in her bridal dress, and her virgin bloom; the young mother in the first hours of her fallacious joy; the capable, the cultivated, the endowed, just entering on the career of ambition! Go and try the effect of your doctrine on some young couple, sitting beside an empty cradle and a dead child! Why, the world is full of such things. There are cries and groans continually rising from the heart of humanity, filling the air, and making the whole earth terribly vocal in the ear of God, however men like you, or society at large, may be deaf or indifferent to the voices that pervade it. It may be pretty and poetical to talk or sing (as I once heard somewhere), about the evening hour being musical with the murmur of little children's prayers.

But look at these children when they are men and women! *Think of that.* How many of them will wish they had never been born! How many of them will be ruined—penned in your prisons, inveterate in crime—prowling in the streets, in finery or rags! How many, without positively destroying their prospects and losing their position, will yet go burdened through life with a fearful load of sorrow and sin,—the secret consciousness of early imprudence, in spite of subsequent recovery and success, weighing on their souls and eating out the very life of life! But, worst of all, there are the poor wretches who once had—and that, too, perhaps in the highest degree and amplest measure—those very things, which you require at a man's starting in life in order to his making the best of it,—but who have squandered them all;—have destroyed their health, ruined their reputation, dissipated their property, and stand among their fellows branded as lost, vicious, or criminal! What can your gentlemanly doctrine do for *them?* How does the world look, think you, to such? What can it *be* to them,—what can they make of it? I should like to know *that!* 'Beauty of virtue!'—'good to the good;'—'*usefulness* of this and the other excellent habit!' Why, the majority are wicked? What's the use of talking in this style? It can benefit nobody. It is like 'smoke to the eyes,' and 'vinegar upon nitre,' or like 'singing songs' to the sad and sorrowful. It only chafes and stings, goads and exasperates. I know it by myself.

You have stood there, for the last two hours, and have put us all to the most exquisite torture. You have been—"

Now, stop a moment, my good friend,—excuse my interrupting you,—but since you have referred to *yourself*,—having exhausted your accusations against the laws of Nature and the condition of Society,—allow me to request, that you will forget for a moment what *I* have been doing, and tell us something of what *you* have been doing. Give us a sketch of your own history. You say you are miserable,—and you certainly look so. You drew a blank, perhaps, in the great lottery of life when you came into the world. Everything has been against you. Let us hear. Who are you? Where were you born? What have you been doing with yourself? Tell us. Take your time, and go your own way about it; only, whatever you do, do it fully and honestly.

"Well,—I will. I shall be thought culpable, of course; but I am much more to be pitied than blamed. I never wilfully hurt a living thing. I was never any one's enemy, though I may have been my own. I can't say exactly that I drew a blank,—for low as I am now, I was well born. I was the son of a gentleman; and of as good a Christian, too, as ever breathed. My father was a respectable and pious man;—a man of distinguished public philanthropy: indeed, he was so constantly taken up with various societies, that we children seldom saw him at home. We were the subjects, however, of many prayers.

My mother was inexpressibly kind and indulgent; always excusing or hiding our faults; and always coming in between each of us and anything in the form of punishment or displeasure. I was educated at an expensive and distinguished school. I learnt classics and mathematics; was clever and forward above many; was a favourite with the masters, the idol of my schoolfellows; was selected to recite at annual examinations and public days, and had always an abundance of fun and pocket-money. As a young man, I soon found myself generally in request. I sang well; was a good mimic; and had an appearance and manners which I could not but see were prepossessing and attractive. I began life with every advantage. I had friends, connexions, and business-prospects of the first order. *You* would have thought I might have done anything. It is quite a mistake. Others, far less favoured, were always, somehow, more *fortunate* than I. I'm sure I don't know how it was; but—everything went wrong; I succeeded in nothing. My spirits gave way. No one could have borne up under what I had to bear. I naturally endeavoured to escape from myself, and was glad to do so in the company of sympathizing and good-natured associates. But I was tempted to go further than I intended. I *meant* no harm; but one thing led to another, till I was utterly crushed by debt, and thoroughly entangled by dissipation. I neglected my wife,—a delicate, beautiful creature! I ruined my children; I kept sinking lower and lower, as aids were

exhausted, and friends withdrew, and projects failed, till I had nothing left but my natural talents, and these something the worse for wear. I 'm ashamed to say it, but—I have sung in taverns; I have given imitations of public men; I have presided as a mock judge; I have been glad to make a shilling by the laughter of fools! Yes, Sir; I,—the son of a gentleman, the husband of an angel, the favourite of his mother, the observed, the admired, the courted, once, in the circle in which he first moved,—*I* have done *that!* I told you my father was a religious man. I heard all about religion from a boy. We attended a respectable place of worship. The doctrine taught was the most correct; but it did not seem intended for me. It always left upon me the impression, that the young could not have anything to do with it. I found that I was born so utterly bad, that I could do nothing for myself; and my father and mother most sincerely believed that they could do nothing for me either! I got the idea that I must first be even worse than I was, before I could be better; but that *after* I had grown up and been very sinful, I might pass, as by a miracle, 'from darkness to light, and from the Devil to God.' If I was to be *saved*,—for the only notion I received of religion was, that it was something to save people from hereafter going to hell,—if I was to be saved, I thought I should be converted, and that, then, this conversion would change me in a moment, and, *that done,* I should be secure for ever! It seemed to be of no consequence

how much or how little guilt I might actually have contracted, for I thought it could all be expunged in an instant, leaving me as pure and peaceful as an angel,—if not, indeed, rather more so. I had heard it stated, in fact, that the greater the sinner, the greater the saint; the more iniquity there was removed, the more would glory accrue to God, and the stronger would be the proof, to the individual and observers, of real conversion having been experienced. I doubtless misunderstood the teacher, and misinterpreted and misapplied the teaching. At any rate, I have not found in my experience, what my crude ideas led me to expect. I sinned in hope;—but instead of finding myself arrested by mercy, I am abandoned to despair. I have tried lately to read the Bible; but it is full of nothing but thunder and flame. Wherever I open it, it seems to emit sulphur and smoke. I look for the texts which I remember to have heard,—words trembling with tenderness, overflowing with love. I cannot find them. *They are not there.* Those only are there, which are expressive of wrath and pregnant with terror. *Pray* don't go on talking as you have been doing to-night. Life is *not* great. The world is *not* beautiful. You may say so, if you like, to the happy and the fortunate. It may do for them. But what I want to know is,—what is to be done with those who have had no means of enjoying life,—or who have squandered and wasted them? How can you

reconcile the wretched to their lot,—or reconcile to themselves the ruined and the lost?"

It is just as I expected. I am very sorry for you; but I cannot conceal that your *conduct* supplies the key to your opinions. "THE FOOLISHNESS OF MAN PERVERTETH HIS WAY; AND THEN HIS HEART FRETTETH AGAINST THE LORD." This Divine sentence reveals the source of almost all that you have said. "So wisely has God adapted our duty to our nature, that obedience to his precepts is happiness to ourselves." So say the Sages of the East. And you may depend upon it, my friend, that when the mind within is happy,—happy from obedience, from its being in harmony with the established system of order in God's universe,—it has an eye to perceive the good and beautiful in all outward things. When, however, men have utterly dislocated and destroyed themselves by *dis*obedience, then they begin to complain of the constitution of the world; they can see nothing but misery, and hear nothing but wailing;—because they see reflected, from everything about them, the image of their own wretchedness, and they hear, on all sides, only the echoes of their own complaints. The outward and the inward, are mirrors to each other. What you *are*, you will see. "The pure in heart see God." The godlike perceive Him everywhere. He looks forth upon them, lovingly, from all things. The dark in soul, see in

the universe their own shadow;—the shattered spirit can only reflect external beauty in forms as untrue and broken as itself. Of course, you are aware, that it is quite impossible for me adequately to reply to all your objections. Several of your suggested topics would admit of large discussion, and might excuse even elaborate argument. As, however, all of them perhaps bear, more or less, on the question of the evening, and on the way in which it has been met, I will just throw out one or two thoughts on some of those many matters which, in your excitement, you have so strangely huddled together.

II.

I should like you first to understand that you have in some measure anticipated what I had intended to refer to, to complete the argument with which I wished to possess these young men. In explaining this, and carrying out my own purpose, I shall be found to meet some of your thoughts. This being done, I will notice briefly your dark and diseased philosophy of life.

So far as we have advanced, you know, the matter, on my theory, stands thus:—Life is capable of being made into something thoroughly satisfactory, *if* such and such things be possessed or done; Religion directly tends to the security, the culture, or the effective doing of these things; *therefore*, religion is favourable to man's making the best of life. Now, to this argu-

ment, I meant to have added another,—a sort of rider, or supplementary syllogism. It would have stood thus:—*But,* many of the race never have some of the things required, or opportunity of doing the rest, and others lose both capital and opportunity by folly and sin;—hence, some never have the chance of success, and others throw it away,—the one class may be worsted by what is out of their control, the other may awake to self-originated misery and terror; *therefore,* to meet the case of these classes—both of them—something is wanted, if life is to be turned to any account at all, which, apparently, is not provided for in our previous argument. That something, however, I find *in the same principle* which that argument recognises and inculcates, namely, religious faith. That one, self-same thing, which, early welcomed and consistently obeyed, sustains the virtues that develop the resources and weave into beauty the material of life,—*this,* (if that be not done), is the only thing to alleviate by its consolations the condition of the miserable, and to soothe by its hopes the consciences of the guilty.

Depend upon it, young men, the more you consider the subject, the more clearly will it be seen, that the religious sentiment is in every way favourable to the interests of humanity in the present life. It is equally so, whether individuals become the subjects of it early or late;—as preparatory to the battle, or when weak and wounded after suffering defeat. I must give you here, however, and request

your attention to them, some phases of the religious life additional to such as we have already seen.

Human nature, simply as such, needs religion; and needs it, too, from the first, in the form of a system of redemption and mercy, forgiveness and grace; *but*, the distinctive characteristics of religiousness, as subjectively manifested in men, may, without destroying its essential sameness in all, differ considerably in different individuals, from the time when, and the circumstances under which, they become religious. It may suffice to take *three* classes. In some, then, religion is like a gradual, general *growth*,—the growth of something that was always within them, for they cannot go back, with distinct consciousness, to any time when they had it *not*. In others, it is like a gentle and gradual *transformation*, by which, in advanced life, outward religious habits, and mere secular virtues, get insensibly changed into earnest faith and divine holiness;—the men may not be conscious of the change *as a process*, but they may feel confident that they *are* changed as a result. In others, again, it is like *escape* from a shipwreck, safety from the burning streams of a volcano, recovery from madness, return to life, release from prison, reprieve from punishment, stillness and quiet after hail and hurricane, a gleam of light after a dark, stormy, and troubled day. But in all cases, observe, true religion, vital, Christian faith, is essentially the same;—the same as to the things believed and hoped for,—the spiritual influences needed and en-

joyed. It differs, as we have described, in different individuals, in some of its characteristics, from time and circumstance; and, as it does this, so also it differs *in its present results*. To some it becomes, (as our whole argument has gone to explain,) the conservative element of virtue and happiness;—the principle which, from the very commencement of the experiment of living, so impels and so guides them, that their entire course is like the morning light, "shining more and more unto the perfect day." To others, it is a new source of satisfaction and joy, an awaking to the apprehension of spiritual things, the influence of a Divine power on the heart,—a change not so much affecting the outward acts and habitudes of the man, as infusing beneath them all an inward life, which, without altering them greatly to the eye of men, imparts to them an essentially new character to that of God. In others, again, as sudden reprieve, return from afar, recovery, escape, restoration, —it is health, peace, life after loathsome leprosy, prodigal wanderings, practical rebellion, prostrate debasement, blighted prospects, ruined fortunes, and anguish and wailing and "desperate sorrow."

Hence it is, you see, that we hold fast both to our original position, and our supplementary statement. Religious faith so operates on the virtues favourable to the present life, that the religious man—one starting as such—has the fairest chance of making the best of it;—but, if life be a blank, or if it become a burden,—if disease, ignorance, poverty, or mis-

fortune incapacitate for improving it, or vice and profligacy destroy its resources, still religious faith is *the only thing* that can meet humanity in these its depressed or desperate circumstances, and impart to it the aids which its necessities demand. The Gospel of Christ brings rest to the weary, hope to the disappointed, light to the desponding, comfort to the mourner, joy and gladness to the neglected and the forgotten. It does this by its divine assurances of love and grace; its revelation of mercy,—of the sympathy of Jesus, the fatherhood of God, the "heavenly house" with its "many mansions," its prepared repose and its realized welcome! In all cases, in which there seems to predominate some inherent defect or evil in life, or in which life becomes so embittered that its brightness is eclipsed, and all its hopes and prospects destroyed,—there is no possible mode of making anything of it, but by throwing upon it the lustre of another, and bringing the soul to repose in God, through the disclosure of His mercy and character in Christ. So, too, in all cases of great sin, of vice, crime, long-continued or enormous delinquency, it is only the Gospel that can adequately meet them. Although God will not work a miracle to counteract the consequences of men's acts of transgression considered as violations of natural law, He *has* wrought that, in the redemptive work of the Christ, which can cut off the spiritual and eternal consequences

of those acts considered as *sins*, or as the violations of a higher law. It is religion alone, the religion of the Bible, that can confidently and consistently speak of pardon, and that can call to repentance with the authority of One who is ready to forgive. By revealing the ground and possibility of mercy, by promising and providing for spiritual renovation, and by turning the sinner from the error of his ways, it can beautify the present, to the worst of its possessors and in its worst aspects, by the hope that apprehends, and the holiness that prepares for a future world.

Thus, Religion is to be looked at in two lights, in relation to the question before us. We saw this before, but only in relation to one character,—the early and habitually good man. We have advanced further now, and have included others in the scope of the argument. Religion can take the young man, and can introduce him to "the paths of pleasantness and peace," can make the World become to him "a delightsome land," and Life a career of success and honour. And—it can take the wretched and the sorrow-stricken, the ruined and the disgraced,—those conquered by events, or worsted by themselves,—the man fallen through external calamity, or the fool "filled with his own ways,"—it can take them, and it can reveal and offer to them what nothing else can reveal or offer,—that which, in circumstances like theirs, can alone prevent Life

from becoming a burden, or arrest the writing that might have announced—"It were better for that man had he never been born!"

III.

From these statements, which include, what, from the first, I had intended to introduce, you will perceive that I was not so indifferent to the sad case of the guilty and the miserable, as our poor friend has mistakenly supposed. Some of his complaints have been substantially met by what I have just been saying. There is one other thing, however, that was comprehended in my original plan of thought, which I will now refer to. In doing so, I think I shall meet two or three more of our friend's remarks.

Bear in mind, then—or, if you like, burn into your souls—this truth: So far as this life is concerned,—in relation to its social and secular interests,—men may bring themselves into such circumstances *that nothing whatever can be done for them:*—nothing, by any form of religion as a Divine utterance; or by any amount of religiousness as a subjective power. Men who have possessed advantages, enjoyed opportunities, been again and again, perhaps, in positions where they might have done anything,—such men, making shipwreck of themselves, losing their character, estranging their friends, neglecting or prostituting

their talents, standing at last debased by vice or branded by crime, devoid of credit, unworthy of confidence, shunned by their former associates, and willing themselves to hang the head and to escape recognition,—what on earth can be done for them?—what can you *say* to them in relation to making the best of life, or turning the world in any sense to account? Nothing. They *had* their chance, and they lost it. They *might* have done well,—they did not. Then they cannot now. They must take the consequences of their folly, and just make up their minds to its *irretrievable* results. No one can help them. They are utterly ruined men, so far as this world is concerned; and, as such, they must go to their graves! There is no possibility of reinstating them in the position from which they have fallen; there can be no return of their prospects and opportunities,—no such well-appointed bark as they once had—no such favouring gale as once blew! They *cannot* regain character or confidence. They can never more rise to respectability, or be re-admitted to the circle in which they formerly moved. They poured poison into the cup of life, and they must just go on drinking it to the last. To such men, I know very well, it is torment to hear about "the beauty of virtue;" a stab and an exasperation to be reminded of its "utility" in relation to success and advancement in the world. I can quite understand that,—without at all admitting either the *absolute* impropriety of such topics of discourse, or that they can

never from any have willing audience or cordial welcome. Religion, as a spiritual remedy for a ruined soul, and simply that, can alone meet the case of the men before us. It may restore them, as sinners to God; and it may cheer them with the hope of its better life (as we have already explained); but as to *this* life, it is all over with them. Religious faith itself, with all its productiveness in respect to virtue, can do little or nothing for them *as to what that virtue might once have secured.* If they were now to have the piety of apostles, and the faith of martyrs; if their inward, spiritual being was to become as pure and beautiful as the most eminent saint's that ever breathed; it would be of no use, or next to none. All that might very efficiently qualify them for heaven, but it would be incapable of restoring to them their lost and forfeited position on earth. It might make them objects of deep interest to "good Christians;"—commending them to their compassion, their sympathy, and their prayers;—it might secure them a dole from the charity of a church, or open to them the doors of some asylum for the destitute; but that would be all! Henceforth, they must "go softly all their days in the bitterness of their souls." They must be content to stand aside; to keep quiet; to be unobserved; to say little—even about their religion. Everything has its price; and God and nature, one time or other, will be found rigorously to enforce payment. The social and temporal consequences of their former

course, *the ruined* cannot escape. They must take them with all their aggravations, bear them without complaint, and bow to them as an inevitable penalty. They could only be escaped by the intervention of a miracle; by the derangement, that is to say, of the order of the universe; the suspension of the laws which alone make society possible or safe. The impunity of the bad would be the destruction of that faith in the primary canons of existence and the established rules of duty which, in obedient natures, gives to virtue confidence and hope.

The same principle partially applies to those cases in which men, who have been early immoral, careless, or extravagant, come to a better mind, and, by God's grace, are not only reformed in their outward habits, but "made partakers of a divine nature." There are certain limits within which recovery is possible. Men who have greatly injured themselves in character, credit, fortune, may, within these, turn round, and become steady, successful, reputable, religious; but they will carry with them, nevertheless, in their own thoughts, and often in the thoughts of others, too, for a long time, perhaps for life, some of the consequences of their first conduct. Great sins and practical immoralities may be forgiven by God;—the man may become sincerely penitent and be thoroughly "renewed in the spirit of his mind;" he may have "a good hope through grace," and stand out, in society and the Church, as distinguished and exemplary in all social and domestic virtues;

but he may carry with him to the grave, even on that sanctified soul of his, scars and burns, the effects of the fires of youth, the marks and memorials of early sin, which will retain the power of making themselves felt by sudden twitches and shootings through the heart,—a power they will probably never lose. The man will not doubt his Father's forgiveness, nor have fears for his own ultimate safety; but he never will get over some of the natural consequences that flow from his "great transgression,"—never, as long as he lives! Mind that none of you young men "make a mock at sin," as if it were a trifle,—a thing to be committed one moment and forgotten the next. Mind that you don't fall into the error of supposing that it will be all the same at last, whatever sins a man may have committed, if he only comes to be pardoned by God, and to have the guilt of them washed away. It will *not* be all the same;—certainly not in this world, nor, possibly, in the next either. As to forgetting sin;—*you* may forget it, but depend upon it sin will not forget you. No: "Be sure your sin will find you out." You may commit it here, in London, and go to the other side of the world; you may commit it at the equator or the poles, and return home, and be solaced for years with the household charities; but sin, especially any great and aggravated transgression, however fled from, and however forgot, will pursue its perpetrator as the work of his hands pursued *Frankenstein,*—it will

scent his track, and come up with him, and stand before him, and assert its parentage and demand recognition, and that, too, in a way which will admit of no denial, and which may extort from him the piercing and bitter cry—"*Thou makest me to possess the iniquities of my youth.*"

IV.

Here I might directly advert to the sad history which you have just heard. It affords many topics of remark, intimately connected with the subject of this lecture. Unfortunately, however, they are such as would demand a lecture, or lectures, for themselves. I shall only rapidly glance at them.

Our friend's father was probably indebted to religion for his rise and position in life; and then, the advantages of that position, actually perhaps became a snare to his son! It is curious to observe how frequently we see what is gained by a parent lost by a child; and not only so,—not only that one generation rises and another falls,—but that while one rises *by virtue*, and by religious virtue too, the next in succession falls by sin, and by sin engendered by the secular rewards of its predecessor's goodness! Every effect, however, has a cause; and, in such cases, we must not only look to the fact of the father working resolutely, and living hard, with an object before him evoking his energies, and thus securing those very things which soften and subjugate his

son, by repressing exertion and relieving him of the stern necessity for work;—but, we must observe, whether there may not be *special* causes, somewhere or other, in some error, weakness, or culpability, to account for the change. It is not to be supposed that the constitution of things is such, that the virtue of one man is to be rewarded by what must inevitably ruin another; or that the Church, through God's blessing on her temporal concerns, is to become a nursing mother for the world! We are not intended, surely, for a constantly returning cycle like that! Yet, such, I fear, life must often be, in two successive generations, if those who rise do not understand how all responsibilities increase with their success, and how, especially, they owe to their children such discipline and culture, as shall fit them for *retaining* the advantages to which they are born. To retain, requires as much virtue as to secure,—though of a different kind; and, alas! it often happens that he who has one set of virtues, and who rises by their exercise, is incapable of teaching the other to his son,—or negligent of the duty, or seduced from the full and efficient discharge of it.

Here, you see, is our friend's father, a Christian gentleman, so taken up with various institutions to which his religious character introduces him, that he is almost a stranger to his own children! Then, there is his mother, injudiciously indulgent; thinking herself only fond and tender in what she does, and yet becoming, by doing it, *unjust* alike to her husband

and her sons. This neglect, or want, or relaxation of discipline; this absence, or contrariety, of home-influences, may sometimes be seen in the families of very good people. They never can be anywhere, however, without results. He who has succeeded in doing one thing, should never forget that his children may not be able to do another as easily,—that other being perhaps as difficult in itself, and beset with greater disadvantages and temptations. But to keep this always in mind, and to act resolutely upon it, requires more firmness, self-denial, self-command, larger views, and fuller parental co-operation and sympathies, than are very common,—and it is not to be wondered at, if we now and then see the consequences in such cases as the one before us. The boy at home, finding himself born to wealth and *indulgence*; and always having at school more money than he knew what to do with; and then the young man entering into society, with his way all opened and smoothed before him, verdure and flowers on every side;—it was all hazardous from the very beginning! "Fulness of bread," easy circumstances, high spirits, a little vanity, a little flattery, elegant intercourse, frequent invitations,—why, these things where there has not been thorough discipline, and where there is the want of deep thought, established principle, and early, resolute goodness, may gradually lead to the most disastrous and fatal results. Our poor friend here, has not said a single thing about himself, that I have not actually met with, again and

again, in real life. In fact, I could have told his story for him, and even a far worse one, by just putting together things that I could bring up from the slumbering recollections of that passive memory in which lie buried the remains of what I have seen and known.

Then, again, as to the *religious* history, if it can be called such, which you have heard,—it is very sad, but I have been intimately acquainted with many similar facts. Religion has, I fear, been too much presented, by the popular, Evangelical leaders of the Church, as if it were a thing only for the next world, or for securing to us a happy eternity, and only for men in mature life, and after becoming fully developed sinners; instead of being intended, also, to *prevent* this,—adapting itself to the child, the youth, the young man, and so penetrating his spiritual nature, and moulding his inward life, as "to keep him from evil, that it might not grieve him." In point of fact, however,—in spite of what may be speculatively maintained or popularly taught apparently countenancing an opposite belief, especially in times of religious revival, and in connexion with the sudden reformation of the bad, —religion itself, and the teachers of religion, *cannot* treat great sinners, in these times and in this country, as they could in some former periods, and as they can now among the aboriginal races of the Isles of the Pacific. I have known those who have sat in Tahiti and similar lands, surrounded by women, who

were objects to them of deep interest and Christian affection, each of whom was employed in trying to reckon up how many of her children she had murdered! In England, such women would have been transported or hanged. Even ministers, though they might have visited them in gaol, and conversed and prayed with them, and hoped the best for them in spite of their enormities, would never have come to think them amiable and interesting converts, admitted them to their houses as friends, or proposed them for admission to church communion. And yet it is as true now as it was at first, and as true here as at the Antipodes, that "the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses from all sin," that the Gospel proclaims pardon for "the chief of sinners," and that, though a man's "sins be as red as scarlet or crimson," his soul can become "as white as wool or snow." *The truth* is the same, but there is a great difference as to the impression of the message, the power of receiving it, and even as to its aspect and meaning to the individual, between one man who has been so placed as to have been always within its reach, and who ought to have been restrained from iniquity by its influence, and another man, who never heard of it at all, till ignorance and idolatry had sunk and steeped him in lust and blood.

Look at the way in which the Bible seems to speak to this wretched man here;—and do you, young men, take a warning from it. Never forget, that the Bible will be to you what you are to it. You will find in

it what you bring to it. "To the merciful, thou wilt show thyself merciful; to the upright, thou wilt show thyself upright; to the pure, thou wilt show thyself pure; and *to the froward, thou wilt show thyself froward.*" "Thus saith the Lord God: Every man that setteth up his idols in his heart, and cometh to the prophet, I the Lord will answer him that cometh, *according to the multitude of his idols.*" There is a general principle here applicable to all cases, and illustrated everywhere and at all times; —a principle, in fact, operating in relation to other things as well as the Bible, though it is to that only that we at present apply it. A good man, in reading the Scriptures, never notices the passages that terrify others. In relation to these, he reads the Book as a little child reads it in relation to such as the corrupt and impure ridicule or pervert,—he does not see them, does not understand them,—they have no message or meaning for *him*. To his eye, every page is covered with a mild radiance, with Divine light, laughter and sunshine. If he casually opens it, he is sure to be addressed by some great promise, some pregnant word of consolation and strength; or to see some picture of the blessedness of the righteous, or some bright gleam of the glory of heaven! He cannot help it. An instinct in himself detects the words,—a secret life, in the words themselves, makes them stand out prominent and lustrous. In the same way, the agitated and terrified, the sinner alarmed by

the recollection of his sins, with his soul disturbed by foul passions and his conscience blackened by fearful guilt,—to him, the Book seems to be nothing but a message of wrath;—every column is covered with characters of fire, every syllable seems sharp as the point of an arrow—pungent as if tipped with poison,—constructed only to pierce and wound! He *cannot find* the texts which he thinks he remembers. They are not there. When he looks for them, it is the alarming only that start into view, and become terribly alive and vocal! Now, all this is perfectly natural. The Bible will reveal itself to you, according to your state of mind. As I have just said, you will find, when you go to it, what you take. In ordinary cases, how different the same Book would be to one opening it reeking from a debauch, and to another returning from some act of mercy, or self-sacrifice! The man appalled and terrified by remorse, may come to be soothed by true contrition; his heart may get softened by repentance, and when stilled and guided by gracious influence, his eye will open to what he saw not before; he will discover then that the Bible is replete with the words of love, and that it has voices of tenderness to win and tranquillize, as well as of terror to agitate and alarm. It is proper here, however, for me to forewarn you, that it is quite possible, especially with those who have enjoyed and abused religious advantages, for the Book to continue silent to the last, or to utter nothing but its awful thunders,

refusing to speak, except in words expressive of condemnation and productive of despair. If you do not "make the best of life" by early goodness, you may *so* make the worst of it, as not only to render your temporal circumstances utterly irretrievable, but to put your spiritual condition beyond hope. You may become "past feeling," "having your conscience seared as with a hot iron;" you may be so utterly lost and ruined by sin,—"hardened by its deceitfulness,"—as to be incapable of being "renewed again unto repentance," or of believing the words, or listening to the message of mercy and hope. It is sad to think, what a difference there may one day come to be, between two of you young men, who are sitting together there, side by side, on the same bench, and between whom there seems no perceptible difference at present! Why, the two men of the first Psalm may be thought of as having been brothers,—even twins. They start together from the same womb and from the same lap. The course of one is goodness and light, verdure and joy; he is wise and "blessed," and "all that he does prospers." The other "walks in the counsel of the ungodly, stands in the way of sinners, and then sits down in the seat of the scornful;" he gets beyond the possibility of recovery, becomes fit for nothing but to be driven away "as chaff before the wind," is ultimately condemned "in the judgment, and excluded from the Congregation of the righteous!" Those two boys,—the sons of the same mother!

V.

With respect to the objection that I address myself to the rich rather than the poor; that I overlook the working classes; that I forget the misery that fills the world; and that I shut my eyes to the essential meanness of human pursuits; to all this, I can only answer by a very few rapid words. With these, I shall terminate the argument so far as it is intended to bear on the present world, and, through them, glance at our poor friend's sad and gloomy philosophy of life.

Be so good as observe, then, that I have been led to refer to worldly prosperity and success in life under those particular forms in *which they can be best understood by young men like you.* As I am addressing those who are engaged in the business of a great city, who may rise to appointments of considerable trust and proportionate emolument, or who may even become principals and acquire wealth, of course I speak to you in language and with allusions suited to your case. I am quite aware, I rather think, of the existence and pressure of all sorts of labour and toil, and of the fact that there are multitudes of human beings who never can be anything but working men. But I am by no means disposed, either to regard constant, physical labour as a condition of life so terribly bad, or to admit that my doctrine may not apply to men who are

employed in the commonest handicrafts. If I were addressing an assembly either of skilled or of unskilled labourers, I could point out, I imagine, how the habits and virtues nourished by religion, and how religion itself in all its influences, might greatly benefit them in their sphere of life, and tend to raise them *in* it or out of it. Even with respect to the working man of original capacity, with genius, and taste, and literary habits, I believe it might be shown that by continuing in his "order," exercising his mind, and using his power there, he might enjoy more happiness and do more good, than by getting beyond it, and becoming exclusively devoted to literature. And I am quite sure, that whatever may be his talents, or the particular turn of the working man's mind, true religion would operate favourably on his faculties and pursuits, and throw around his life and upon his circumstances, what would tend to elevate and to beautify both.

As to the misery that there is in the world,—it is too true that there is plenty of that. Among us, however,—in the present condition of English society,—the greater number of *the worst* cases of absolute suffering, have been either occasioned, or greatly aggravated, by the sufferers themselves. God forbid that I should exclude them from sympathy or aid on that account. I only wish to point out, that the constitution of things under which we are placed, would have prevented much of the wretchedness which we lament—if men would have

allowed it; and we have already seen that for inevitable evil there is consolation and hope. Our friend, however, is very much mistaken in thinking that men who have to toil and work are therefore unhappy, or that they feel themselves to be injured and oppressed by others. This is a common notion with the idle and dissipated, the "lovers of pleasure," and "loose fellows of the baser sort;" but it is not true. Happiness is much more equally diffused than many imagine. Most men neither feel the want, nor sigh for the possession, of elegance and luxuries which they never have enjoyed. The sons of toil may be heard *singing* at their work,—and its daughters too; while many will often have as much rapture in accomplishing some difficult task, as a successful poet, orator, or statesman. Human happiness depends on being comfortable *in* our position. The greatest misery might be produced by just suddenly changing the classes of society, and thus putting them into new and untried spheres! It is hard to say which would find himself the worse off—or perhaps *not* hard to say;—the nobleman handling the flail, or following the plough; or the village politician made a minister of State, the cobbler a lord, or the boor a bishop!

Our friend was pathetic about premature death; and pungent (as he thought) about the want of sublimity in certain employments,—such as those of the butcher and costermonger. Nothing, it would appear, can justify our speaking of "the beauty of

the world," or "the greatness of life,"—because some children die, and some men have to touch filth and dirt! I believe such ideas are very common, and that many people think them very just. There is no doubt, also, that depreciating descriptions of the world and man, eloquent or devout, by moralists and divines, have greatly tended to foster these sentiments. Now, I do not think that we should encourage them. I don't believe that we go the right way to improve men, by teaching them to sigh over, perhaps to despise, the place they occupy and the duties allotted them. I am disposed to think that nothing would more tend to promote a healthier condition and manlier tone of moral and religious feeling amongst us, than a grateful recognition of the good that there is in many forms of evil, and of the divine that may underlie the meanest aspects of our earthly life.

I am fond of children. I think them the poetry of the world,—the fresh flowers of our hearths and homes;—little conjurors, with their "natural magic," evoking by their spells what delights and enriches all ranks, and equalizes the different classes of society. Often as they bring with them anxieties and cares, and live to occasion sorrow and grief, we should get on very badly without them. Only think—if there was never anything anywhere to be seen, but great, grown-up men and women! How we should long for the sight of a little child! Every infant comes into the world like a delegated prophet, the harbinger

and herald of good tidings, whose office it is, "to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children," and to draw "the disobedient to the wisdom of the just." A child softens and purifies the heart, warming and melting it by its gentle presence; it enriches the soul by new feelings, and awakens within it what is favourable to virtue. It is a beam of light, a fountain of love, a teacher whose lessons few can resist. Infants recal us from much that engenders and encourages selfishness, that freezes the affections, roughens the manners, indurates the heart;—they brighten the home, deepen love, invigorate exertion, infuse courage, and vivify and sustain the charities of life. It would be a terrible world, I do think, if it was not embellished by little children; *but*—it would be a far more terrible one *if little children did not die!* Many, I dare say, would be shocked by this assertion. It may be true, however, nevertheless.

I am quite aware that Death is in itself a very fearful thing; and that *premature* death is thought to be "mysterious,"—something to be submitted to, as incapable of being reconciled with the idea of presiding wisdom and love,—to be mourned over as an unmixed evil, expressive only of the wrath of God and the misery of man! Now, I quite hold that death is *punitive*. I believe it to be the consequence and the proof of the apostasy. I take it to be the mode of departure from earth *which was introduced by sin*,—painful, appalling, dark,—instead of that bright and glorious translation which would probably

have awaited successful virtue. You will please to observe, that, as no world of limited extent could have continued the fixed dwelling-place of immortals, whose numbers were perpetually receiving augmentation,—and as the primary law of all intelligence would seem to be that of progress and advancement, —the probability is, that man was never meant for this world only; departure from it would be the law of his creation; but, on the alternative of his retaining his loyalty to God, that departure would have occurred after the full development of his nature *here* had fitted him for a rise in the scale of being, and it would have come in the form of reward and honour, perhaps with visible and public splendour,—the joyous congratulations of those left on earth mingling with the welcome, the symphonies and the songs of those superior spirits, to whose higher sphere the individual ascended. Sin, however, reversed all this. Instead of it, Humanity had to "depart hence" by returning to the dust;—to go down into the dark valley, and to pass thus towards the awful future,—the vast unknown!

Death, then, simply considered, having become the law by which man's residence here was to terminate; and Humanity having become what entirely changed its character and circumstances,—giving a new importance to the relationships of life, and impressing uncertainty, to say the least, on the future beyond it;—this being the case, *to render life itself tolerable to man,* it was necessary that the fixed,

general law should be softened and modified by two others. That is to say, it was necessary that death should so occur, as not to be of the nature of a distinct, positive, and public *revelation* of the precise *future* into which each individual passed; and, that men should live *utterly uncertain* as to when they were to die. The punitive character of the original law being admitted, anything that would modify it in these two respects, would be of the nature of *benevolent relief*. This relief is accorded to us. The first is provided for by death happening *alike to all*;—and the second by its occurring *at all ages*. Whatever the character of individuals may be, however possible it is for any to acquire a fitness for a higher sphere, (and that, as we believe, is pre-eminently possible now through Christ)—still, *all* die, and, as a general rule, under the like circumstances of pain and suffering, and very generally, too, with similar feelings to themselves and to survivors. There is not that difference between the death-beds of the religious and the worldly, except in particular cases, as some may suppose; and there is always that ignorance in relation to the dead, which makes it possible to the living to hope. So far, therefore, as all the *circumstantials* of death are concerned,—the precursors and attendants and immediate results, disease, pain, dissolution, corruption,—which in all ages have constituted topics of pathetic discourse, or subjects for odes and songs of lamentation,—so far as these are concerned, they are the benevolent pro-

ducts of a modifying law, with which God in his goodness has softened the rigour of the original infliction.

The same principle applies to premature death. All of you can see, that a general law, terminating life in all cases on a precise day, would be painful and intolerable; it would poison life from first to last, and it might provoke and exasperate licence and lust. It is important both for happiness and virtue, that no one should know when he is to die. This object, however, can only be secured by death happening at every moment throughout the entire period allotted to man;—extreme cases, even, such as death before leaving the spring-head and fountain of life, and death being delayed beyond all known or ordinary instances,—these are alike the working out of the same law. To secure, then, the proposed object,—to place humanity under the most gracious and benevolent constitution of things at all *possible* now,—in order that men might so live as to *enjoy* life, because happily ignorant respecting its termination,—on this account it is, that infants and children die; that youths and maidens die; that the young man splendidly endowed, the young woman beautiful and accomplished, die; the bride in her day of tremulous delight, the mother in the hour of her new joy, the strong man in the glory of his strength,—on *this* account they die. They die,—*that all who live* may live on under the blessed consciousness that they know not when *they* are to die. The whole race

reaps the benefit of premature mortality. The glow and brightness of all life, is connected with the graves and sepulchres of the young. Those who die early, or in the midst of their days, enjoy the advantage while they live. But the law would be infringed, and would be contradictory and unnatural, if *parents* were to be *sure* that no child could possibly die till it was a day old, or a month, or a year, or two years, or ten;—to be thoroughly kind, the law must be carried out to its farthest extent, and come into play from the very first moment of possible vitality. Hence it is that infants die;—they die through the working of a most benevolent secondary law, brought in to break the rigour of the first! And they die *for the benefit of the race*. Their lives are taken, for the sake of securing the happiness of the world. I had almost said,—and I *may* say it as speaking *in a figure*,—that a babe in its coffin may be supposed to look, to its weeping parents, like a little "dead Christ!" It has died vicariously,—to secure a temporal advantage for the world, even as Christ died vicariously to secure for it a spiritual redemption. The one dies, that we may not know *when* we shall die; the other died that we *might* know "that our Redeemer liveth." By the one fact we are enabled to endure life; by the other we are taught to die in hope, and to look forward to the resurrection of the dead. Let a halo of glory, then, seem to encircle that fair brow,—the brow of that little babe, lying cold and dead there, on the lap of its mother! Poor

mother! thy sorrow is great! Weep away;—let the hot tears gush out;—it is not the time to speak to thee now. But very soon thou wilt come to understand, how, all thy life, thou hast been reaping advantages *that came to thee by the death of the infants of others;* and thou wilt learn to acquiesce in what is really the result of one of the most benevolent of God's arrangements. The death of thy child, *as a human being,* is from sin; but his death *as a child* is, because he is one of the chosen of the race, whose lot and mission are not to live to *do* and to *enjoy,* but simply to die,—but to die for the benefit of the whole species, the world over!

As to ignoble and mean forms of life,—I would have you to understand, that true greatness is to be looked for, not in any external appearance, but in the principles which may fill, or may underlie, all outward forms. A shoe-black, or a costermonger, is nothing particularly great as such; but he may be greater in character than lords or kings, as he *is* greater, in his essential attributes as a man, than any star or sun, or than all suns and stars put together. He can *purpose* to obey God. He can *mean* to do what he does,—which none of the planetary bodies can; and he can mean to do *right;* to be true and just; thus yielding to those universal laws of moral order which touch and encircle all intelligence, and to Him who established them, voluntary obedience. That little boy there, with his black brush and his red jacket, in spite of the dirt of his occupation, may, in the noblest sense, "have

"clean hands;" and in spite of his coarse clothing, he may have beating beneath it a heroic heart. Why look at the lad! What has happened to him? A gentleman, by mistake, has given him a sovereign between two penny pieces, and he has just discovered it! He runs away from his waiting customer,—follows the first,—finds him in the crowd, —hands him his gold,—and returns to his work again, with a flushed face and beating bosom,—relieved of a load that might have oppressed him, but with a consciousness and a conscience that fill him with light. Bless the child! Now, my boy, work away! What a polish you are putting on that boot! But you do your work, *honestly*, I see;—you are *thorough* in everything. That's right! Now, gentlemen, don't mind how men talk, who see nothing but the outward forms of things. That boy, in doing that *right* act, struck a chord that extends through the whole universe, touches all moral intelligence, visits every world, vibrates along its whole extent, and conveys its vibrations to the very bosom of God! There's more glory to the eye of superior natures, resting on that red jacket and emitted by that *honestly* polished boot, than is to be seen in the persons or the doings of many who act for nations, and are clothed in purple. Pray learn to understand how all work has in it a spiritual element; how the meanest thing on earth has a divine side; how all temporary forms include essences that are to be eternal. Whatever be the meanness

of a man's occupation, he may discharge and prosecute it on principles common to him with Michael, or Gabriel, or any of the highest spirits of heaven. If an angel came to earth, to live and work in the likeness of a man, and in one or other of man's many occupations, he would not care much whether he governed a kingdom, or sold tripe. He would act on precisely the same *principles* whichever he did. It is said with inimitable simplicity and beauty in the Gospel, that the disciples having viewed the sepulchre, on the morning of the resurrection, "went away again to their own home." From the contemplation of the greatest prodigy, from almost immediate contact with it, they returned to their houses and to the ordinary affairs of common life. It is thus, as Dr. Arnold, I think, somewhere remarks, that great thoughts, underlying and animating small duties, is the true idea of practical Christianity. It is to *slaves* you may remember that the apostle says by serving their masters "not with eye-service as men-pleasers, but as pleasing God;" by "not purloining, but showing all good fidelity;" by "not answering again," but being silent with the "froward," and even "taking their buffetings patiently"—stripes that might be administered for no wrong-doing, but in passion and wrath;—by doing and bearing all this, *on the principle* of loyalty to God, and for the sake of pleasing their Divine Master,—they are told that they would "*adorn* the doctrine of Christ;" that they would

be acceptable to Him, "who looketh not at the outward appearance;" but who, disregarding all the mere *forms* of life, is intent on what is inward, in each man alike,—"whether he be bond or free." Depend upon it, young men, there is a way of looking at things, which invests them with high and glorious attributes, in spite of all that may seem mean in our employments, or base about ourselves. Depend upon it, too, that it is favourable to a healthy tone of mind, to understand matters and to think of them thus. Christ, on the throne of his Father, with heaven and earth alike beneath his eye,—all their inhabitants engaged in their separate and various tasks,—depend upon it, *He* looks, not so much at the material, so to speak, of any act, as at the mind of the agent; not at the thing done, but at the reason and the rule regarded in doing it. Where *the right principle* is seen to be recognised and obeyed, *Human Life,* under any of its meanest and most sordid forms, is, in the estimation of our loving Lord, *as great and beautiful a thing* as life in the skies!

PART V.

THE DIFFERENT THEORIES OF A FUTURE LIFE.

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Having now both explained and defended the theory we advocate as to the surest way of making a good thing of the present life, we advance to the question respecting the safest preparation for the next. We have no hesitation about the reply to be given to this. Religious faith,—especially as regulated and modified by the Gospel,—religious faith, which, as we have seen, is, by way of natural consequence, favourable to the virtues which best turn the present world to account,—that same principle, we believe, will be found to constitute our greatest security for entering with advantage into a future one.

But our Philosopher, I see, is rising to speak. He wishes again to interpose something; or, perhaps, he is going to tell us what impression has been made upon him by our previous argument.

"I am going to do no such thing. It is quite labour enough to have to listen for two or three

mortal hours to what, after all, does not seem to be believed even by some of your Christians themselves! You have had more difficulty with them, I think, than with me. At least, you have only replied to me by a sort of implication,—but with the religious objections, you have had to come into direct collision, and to struggle at tedious length. I will not say whether you have satisfied me or not. I am willing to admit, indeed, that you have placed the subject in one or two new lights, and have made it look rather more rational than I anticipated you could. I am still of opinion, however, that my theory of virtue is much more disinterested than yours, for *I*, literally, have 'no expectations.' I look for nothing. As to gratitude for what I enjoy, I don't believe *that* to be either necessary or possible. I do not trouble myself to be thankful,—for I have no One to thank. I take what I can get; I get what I can; I submit to the worst, or to what cannot be helped, and—there's an end to it. That's my philosophy;—and a very rational philosophy I think it is,—especially for such perfectly insignificant creatures as we are, who are here to-day and gone to-morrow; whose origin is a mystery, whose life is a dream, and whose progress is only from darkness to darkness, or from nothing to nothing.

> " 'Man comes into the world naked and bare,
> His way through it is sorrow and care,
> He goes out of it—*nobody knows where!*'

I never heard anything, either poetry or prose, more

true than *that*. You have the entire philosophy of man and life in three lines. I am well aware that the subject may present itself differently;—and at times it does so present itself even to me. I then think of the wonderfulness of the human faculties, of the glow and glory of the world, of the means we possess of varied enjoyment, and of the importance of making the most of the present, since we can know nothing of anything else. Whichever view, however, I may be in the mood for indulging, Religion seems to be inconsistent with it. It either adds to the original misery of human nature, by its imaginary horrors; or it takes off from everything that makes life great, elegant, or enjoyable. At least, hitherto, I have always felt this. If I could believe as you seem to believe, I might come perhaps to think differently. But I don't understand your Christianity at all. You have either got a new version of it, or I have been under a mistake, or the books I have been in the habit of reading have misrepresented it altogether. I have always thought that it was a narrow, low, mean-spirited affair;—that it was intolerant to everything like taste, science, art, and literature; that it scowled on social enjoyment, repressed ambition, was averse to all manly estimates of life, and discountenanced and forbade the improvement and use of our available materials for present satisfaction. Religion has always been spoken of in my hearing, and I have always pictured it to myself, as a sort of raw-head-and-bloody-bones, set up by kings and priests, to frighten

people into servility in this world, by working on their fears of damnation in another. I will not discuss, however, the truthfulness or untruthfulness of this representation. Bút I do wish to say something, which may not have occurred to you, as to the impossibility of there being a future state *at all.* Of course, if that is settled, there is an end to all argument about *preparation* for it,—at least with those who see it to be so.

"That is what I rose to say;—though I have been seduced into other observations. I want to utter just one word, about the absurdity of this idea of a future state;—a word, however, so decisive, that you will be obliged to acknowledge that *I*, at least, with my views, cannot be expected to listen—except with a smile—to anything you are now going to advance.

"I *might* observe, indeed, that you can do nothing with any one who really knows how to think; for you can only repeat the usual fallacy in relation to your subject. At least, all the Christian reasoning I ever heard upon it, was nothing whatever but reasoning in a circle. The preacher first gives a description of a New Testament Paradise,—and then he proceeds to show how directly and surely *the New Testament path to Paradise* leads to it! Why, there's no argument in that. What's the use of telling us that heaven is such and such a place, taking your views from the Christian books, and then saying, *therefore* the religion of those books supplies the best preparation for it? Of course it will,—*granting* its own idea of

the future! Any fool of a prophet, who invented a heaven to be enjoyed hereafter, would have sense enough to make up something congruous to it when he invented his religion which was to be attended to here. He would be but poor in skill, indeed, and blind in purpose, who, having *both* things to invent, could not contrive to make them fit. You cannot but see, however, that there is no force in such fitness, to one who believes that there neither is, nor *can* be, any heaven at all. The two notions—the Paradise, and the path to it—stand or fall together; and as the one is certainly a piece of mere fancy-work, the other of course goes for nothing. However ingeniously they may be intertwined in a speculative system, or a purely speculative discourse, as a matter of *fact* there is literally no connexion between them. The one, instead of leading to the other as a preparation for it, is neither more nor less than just a preparation that leads to nothing.

"But I do not dwell on this;—though I know beforehand that you cannot save yourself from falling into the fallacy. That, however, is your concern, not mine. What I want to explain is, the ground on which I beg to decline giving the least attention to anything you may say about another world. That, in plain words, is this:—I don't believe there is a God; and,—if there is no God,—there cannot by possibility *be* any future life for man. When we embrace, Sir, the great truth of the eternity of the universe, and get rid of the enormous fiction of a

personal Deity, why of course notions of another life, human immortality, future state, and all that, vanish into thin air, or something worse. You may spare yourself the trouble of saying anything more,—at least so far as I am concerned. Indeed, the wisest thing that we could all do now, would, I think, be, to go home. Let us vacate the hall, put out the lights, take our departure, and leave this ample space to silence and darkness,—the image and anticipation of that echoless quiet and eternal gloom, into which *most assuredly* we shall pass at last. There is no God,—and without a God you can promise us nothing."

I am not so sure of that. It is by no means so clear as you seem to suppose, that if there is no God there can be no future state. Your logic, my friend, is, I fear, as defective as that which, I must say, you rather gratuitously supposed I was about to employ. I am willing to concede to you that there was, for once, something in what you said. Previous to the establishment of the truth of Christianity, by some other process, it *would* be something like reasoning in a circle, to take first its own idea of heaven, and then to argue that what *it* prescribed was the best way to it. Or, to put it differently, and perhaps better, it would be far too wide an inference, to say, —that, because a certain book, received by *a certain class* of persons, attributed such and such properties to a future world, therefore *its* prescribed preparation

for that world was MAN's best preparation for another life. I can quite understand, that this would have no force with one whose opinions were like yours; though I can also understand, how to a devout and earnest believer,—one who, by another line of thought, had arrived at the conviction that the book was Divine,—I can understand, I say, how, what was powerless with you might be exciting to him, and be felt to minister both courage and consolation. Depend upon it, however, that your statement and your inference are quite as little connected as those of the preachers you have sometimes heard. Yours *lie* together, I admit, side by side, in many minds,—but they have no real connexion for all that. Some who reject both, think that the one would flow from the other,—that there really *could* be no future life, if there were no God. Those who say that they *believe* there is no God, say also that, for that reason, they disbelieve in a future life. The one negation is supposed to necessitate the other. I will not say,—what in some cases I fear might be said without injustice,—that the one is adopted for the sake of the other;—that the second negation being wished for, the first is believed.

But now, my friend, since you have been so good as to point out what line of argument I am *not* to employ,—though it so happens I never had any intention of employing it, however you may think that no Christian advocate could do anything else; —since, moreover, you take your place at the lowest

bottom of all disbelief,—it may not be amiss, perhaps, to descend to your stand-point, and to begin with *you*. This, I think, will be to begin at the beginning. Your theory is about the most absolute we can imagine. It lays before us the fewest possible materials, denying, at the outset, that we can make anything of them. There is the great Universe indeed, but there is no *known* Personality in it greater than ourselves. Except for numberless material forms in the shape of suns and stars, inhabited, perhaps, by material though animated beings such as we are, probably mortal, with lives, it may be, of shorter or longer term than ours, but all bounded by the two Silences—the darkness out of which they came and to which they go—except for these, illimitable space is a vast vacuity. There was never a *creating*, and there is not a *governing*, Intelligence;—a Mind, or Spirit, with its previous idea, its pursued purpose, and its ultimate end; and—*therefore*—it is impossible that there can be a future life for man. That is your theory. Very well. Let us begin, then, with that. We will descend with you to the place you occupy; and, as we stand there, trying to penetrate the thick darkness—deep down as we may be in the fathomless profound—we shall see, whether we may not discover, as we look upwards, some radiant point, sufficient to inspire hope, or to make it, at least hazardous to assert the absolute impossibility of another life. Gaining one step, we may attempt another. We may possibly succeed! And

then, who can tell but we may find our way to such an elevation, as shall include in the mighty range of the expanse before it, the prospect of "glory, honour, and immortality;"—which point of vision, too, may be of such a nature, as to the clear insight of purified reason, and the happy consciousness of intelligent faith—may connect its discoveries of future good with something present—with the inward life and the divine virtues of the Christian disciple.

II.

"There is no God, and therefore there cannot be a future life for man." Now, I demur to that. I do not think that the one thing so infallibly and necessarily follows from the other. On the hypothesis assumed, a future life may be improbable,—though there are many presumptions even against that,—but that it is clearly and manifestly impossible, is a very hasty and gratuitous inference.

The statement might be met in a way similar to that in which Foster, in his "Essays," meets the Atheistic hypothesis itself. No man can *know* that there is no God; or that there is nowhere demonstrative evidence of His being and attributes; for, he would need to be acquainted, not only with this world and all its facts, but with every other and all theirs. He must know all things and all beings, in all places throughout the mighty circles of this vast universe, and unless he does, he cannot be *sure* but

that there may be, somewhere, evidences of a Divine hand, by which even he would be convinced. The same difficulty confronts the denial of a future life, only with still greater and more determined force; for, instead of sending the unbeliever to ransack other worlds which he has not visited, in search of evidence which may possibly exist, it just takes him and talks to him where he stands,—asks him to consider the phenomena lying around and above him, and to meditate on the fact of his own being.

The thing lies in a nutshell. Nature and Man are positive realities. Absolute scepticism,—the theory that resolves the whole outward world into the inward subjective ideas of the mind,—even this must *have* a mind with which to work,—a real existence in which ideas can inhere. Though other men may be but impressions upon it, or notions which it originates, it, itself, must at least be something,—and for something to *be* is all that we want. We will not suppose, however, that our friend is the advocate of this system; though, on the ground of it, the argument we are glancing at might be made stronger than on the hypothesis of a material world. Nature and Man, then, being, as we have said, positive realities, why, of course—they *are*. But because they are, that Power, whatever it may have been, by which they were produced, or by which they are sustained,—Chance, Accident, Necessity, the Eternal System of things, or anything else you please to call it,—that which, somehow or other, has been sufficient for their production,

must be sufficient for their continuance;—that which is equal to the bringing of men into being at all, must be admitted to be equal to their perpetuated being, even under new forms, in other circumstances, and in another world. I know very well that even we who believe in God, believe that there are limits to His omnipotence. There are things which He cannot do, because they would imply a physical contradiction. Of course there are the same limits to whatever it was that originated the universe, if it was originated, or to the inherent powers of the universe, if it was eternal. But I deny, that what we are at present advocating, is a thing thus physically transcending the capabilities of Nature. That Nature, which binds together all worlds into one great system, which causes the transmission of light from one to another, and which diffuses among all what maintains subtile but real relations between them; that Nature, with which there is no such thing as waste, which never annihilates a single particle of matter, but which, amid all changes in the forms of things, continues and perpetuates what constitutes their essence; why, it must be *possible* to that to perpetuate *mind*, and to retain in existence what, even our friend here must admit, has nobler properties about it than any that belong to the ultimate and elementary particles of *things*. He cannot be sure, therefore, that there is no future life in store for him, even supposing that there is no creating and governing personal Deity. He may live hereafter, and be perfectly aware that

he is the same thinking and feeling intelligence that he is now, though great transitions and changes may have occurred. Why, he is visible to us, at this moment, as far as we can see *him* at all, in an outward material garb, every atom of which is different from what he wore, and what he called himself, or his body, ten or twenty years ago. His consciousness is the same,—*he* has been continued; his memory, conscience, and mental associations, all go back far beyond the time when the oldest particle of this physical framework of his was waving in the fields, moving in the meadows, flying in the air, or swimming in the sea. What he has now, as the vehicle of his will, the medium of sensation, the link that connects him with external things, was, a few years ago, something future—something that *was* not what it *is*, but which, as such, had to *be*, or to become that, though the mind, the consciousness, which lives and acts through it, remains one and the same, —just what it was, in his knowledge, remembrance, and moral identity, with that which, in St. Paul's language, has, in the meantime, been "unclothed" and "clothed upon" again.

Now, all I ask of our friend here, the subject of this wondrous but indisputable transformation, is just to admit that that same power which is equal to *it*,—equal to this development, in the same person, of external mutation with central permanence, or essential identity,—and which, somehow or other, has brought into existence, or manages, the stars,

with all the phenomena of being and life throughout the universe,—I ask him to admit, that this same power, whatever it is, *may*, perhaps, include in its marvellous scheme,—or, rather, may have the means within it of working out, without *planning* it,—the *perpetuation* or *continuance* of man's consciousness when his body is *suddenly* changed, as well as when it is changed by a gradual process, particle by particle. Mind, I do not ask him to say that this is probable, or likely, or easily conceivable, or anything of that sort; I only ask him to admit that it is *possible*, that it *may* be,—and I think I could add, that I might dare him to deny it,—dare him to assert that the thing is *im*possible, or that it could be proved to be so, by any process of reasoning whatsoever. Indeed, even on his hypothesis that there is nothing in the universe but eternal and necessary forces, blindly producing their inevitable results, I am prepared to maintain, that it is not only possible that there may be for us a future life, but exceedingly probable that there will be. For observe;—in all nature, there is no instinct, in any being, without some corresponding object answering to it;—in humanity, the world over, there is the instinctive anticipation, or apprehension, of a future life; now, as Nature never deceives, as she always has a meaning in her suggestions and impulses, whether or not men *exactly* catch its precise import, it is most probable, that there is something or other, whatever it may be, corresponding to this instinctive suggestion of

humanity, which will hereafter be developed, simply as a part of the eternal and necessary system of things,—if *that* be the source of all phenomena. An argument similar to this, founded on a like fact, is, indeed, one of the strongest in support of the hypothesis of a personal God. But I do not insist upon either. I only assert,—and I challenge a denial,—that it *may* be, that the great and mighty machine of the world, which has actually ground out life and mind, in the form of the reasoning and religious intelligence denominated *man*,—it *may* be, I say, that this machine, simply as such, has within it sufficient force to grind out for him *continued* existence in another state;—he remaining essentially himself, to all intents and purposes the same being, retaining his human memory and consciousness, and carrying with him, wherever he goes, the knowledge of the facts of his present existence, and the results of his experience in the present world.

III.

Well then, supposing, or admitting, the bare, abstract possibility of this, let us inquire what sort of a life we have reason to think that second life of man would be, which, by hypothesis, *might* be his, on the theory of Atheism, or the denial of a personal God?

It seems to me that man's second life, or his second form of life, on this theory, would be distin-

guished by two things. First, by his continuing to be subject to the very same laws which encompass him here, so far as his condition would admit; and, secondly, by the life itself being an advance, or capable of being that, on the present one. We should expect it to be life in the same universe; but we should expect it to be marked by progress, or by improved facilities for progress:—for the gradual, it might be, but certainly for the further development of our nature.

These two things I regard as the probable characteristics of that future life of man, which might be his by the simple working out of the results of the inherent laws and forces of Nature.

For, in the first place, so far as we can conceive or know anything of the universe, Philosophy suggests, and Science teaches, that it is *one*;—a great whole, tied and bound together, sustained and pervaded by the same laws, which extend and operate everywhere. The physical laws, under which the world is placed, are the same that govern the planets. We are perfectly acquainted with some which they and we obey in common, as alike moving masses in space, constituting parts of the same solar system. The probability is, that, on the surface of the orbs that roll around us, there may be the action of those same laws that operate on the surface of the earth, and results and phenomena the same in kind, though it may be different in form,—in consistency with that blending of uniformity and diversity which would seem to be a

part of the natural system of things. As a planet, our world is as much in the heavens, as any other; it is a part of that mighty whole, which, throughout all space, is essentially the extension and repetition of the same thing. We have no more reason for thinking that the other planetary worlds are very different from ours, than *their* inhabitants have for thinking that ours (which is as much in the sky as their own) is, in material manifestations or physical garniture, different from theirs. Then, again, if there be spiritual intelligences in other regions of the universe, it is impossible to conceive that the laws of their moral being,—all that prescribe and regulate moral action—*can* be different from that moral system which encompasses ourselves. There may be differences in mental faculty; different modes of perception, of acquiring and communicating knowledge; but there cannot be a different standard of right and wrong. Justice and truth, purity and benevolence, must, in principle, be the same everywhere. There cannot be a world in which it is right to rob and lie, and wrong and vicious to be honest and sincere. As certainly as that the whole system of things is bound together by the same influences, extending and operating throughout all space, so certain is it, (and even more certain,) that the moral universe is pervaded everywhere by the same laws of moral action. If, then, Nature is to develop a future life for man, we may be sure it will be subject to the same laws we are under here, and that we have to obey here. That is to say, supposing we

should be in contact with matter, through some material vehicle of perception and action,—though, in fact, disembodied intelligences,—so much of material law would touch us as our new form of being would admit. If it be possible to be separated entirely from matter, we might be superior to the action of material forces. In either case, we might have new faculties, developed or conferred, intellectually fitting us for new modes of contact with nature and with truth; but, essentially different *moral* perceptions we could not have; nor can it by possibility be conceived, that there should be a new set of laws,—especially a contrary set,—to regulate a virtuous life, or that could materially alter our notions of virtue.

But, in the second place, judging by all that philosophy might suggest, and that analogy would confirm,—reasoning from the facts of the individual mind, and of the world's history,—and rising thence till we can venture upon conjectures as to the primary law of the moral universe,—on these grounds, it would seem to be probable that the second life of man would be capable of being made an advance upon the first; that progress and development would be found to be the established canons of existence; and that, if man did not find his condition improved, that could only arise from something by which he had violated or contravened the system of things, and obstructed the free and proper play of the forces of nature. In spite of what would seem

the hopeless barbarism of some aboriginal tribes;—and in spite of the retrograde movements and adverse fortunes of some nations, and of others even the absolute extinction;—the world has always been making progress. The universal law of Humanity is advancement. Mental, moral, and social health is suspended upon this. And it has, on the whole, been always and everywhere apparent, though individuals stagnate and corrupt, and nations and peoples are scattered and destroyed. These are but the rebound of the waves at the shore, which seem to go back, though the tidal current is steadily setting in all the time, and is raising the ocean over its whole surface. The great eras in the history of the globe,—the records of the past imprinted on its crust, the annals of time, the growth of knowledge,—literature, science, social morality,—all tell the same tale. The law of the universe is progress, higher and higher development, larger acquisitions, profounder views, purer light. Of course, the greatest era that could possibly occur to an individual or the species,—birth into a second life,—would be something *onward*, or something capable of constituting an onward movement. I have had some difficulty in avoiding the statement that it would be *intended*, or meant for this; but I have avoided it, because such language implies an Intelligence to "intend," and our present hypothesis excludes that supposition. I have not said, either, that the next life would infallibly and certainly be advancement,—secured, necessary progress in the

case of every individual,—because that would not be agreeable to the conditionalism of the present world, which marks it as a part of (most probably) a conditional universe. Life and capacity being once conferred, men's after-course here is left to themselves, by the very constitution of what we call nature;—we have been compelled, therefore, to use language respecting the future, which, while affirming its general character, leaves room for exceptional cases. In perfect consistency, however, with all our anxiety neither to over-state nor under-state anything, we do assert, that if there should be a future life for man (which there may be) on the theory of Atheism, it is as plain as anything can make it, that it will be subject to the same laws we are under here, and that it will be capable of being an advance on the present:—just as a child emerging from the womb is surrounded and laid hold of, in its second stage of being, by the same physical laws which affected it before, modified and fitted to its new form of life, and comes forth, also, to a higher development of those attributes of its nature, which it had essentially within it from the first. This is *the law,* though some children may be born deaf and blind, insensible to impressions from the air and light into which they come; some idiotic, incapable of any advance or improvement at all; and some dead, to whom the atmosphere—that which to the living is the element of life—becomes only the agent of corruption.

Thus, standing with our Philosopher, deep down

here at the very lowest extremity of anything like belief, it would seem that it is possible, even thence, to descry overhead a faint streak of light that, for anything *he* can tell, may be the golden *coma* of another world! Supposing this to be the case,—then, since that world must of necessity be such an one as we have described, we next affirm, that *he* will be best prepared for entering it, who, by acting on the principle of religious faith, and developing through it all secular virtue, has first of all made the best of this world. That is to say, our devout, virtuous, Christian man will be in the highest possible state of preparation for that immortality, which, on the theory of Atheism, *may possibly* await the race. Attend for a moment to the proof of this.

If there is no God, there is of course no Divine Personality to offend. The error of our religious friend, therefore, on the subject of religion, will not likely do him any harm. On the opposite hypothesis of there *being* a God,—for His creatures here to deny or blaspheme Him, *that* might occasion serious results, when the inferior spirits came to be consciously confronted with the Supreme; but, if there be no God,—to believe that there is, will not probably be productive of very serious consequences to a man, when he finds out, hereafter, that he was mistaken. The mistake would seem to be so easily made,—to be, indeed, so inevitable to Humanity, from the strong impulse, the mighty inspiration of a universal instinct,—so perfectly natural, in fact, that

we can hardly suppose that Nature herself is so constituted, that such an error *could*, in the next state, work out results very disastrous. How far joy and rapture may be reserved for the Atheist himself, on the future discovery of the truth of his hypothesis, —when he shall be *quite sure* that the universe is the only God, supposing that to admit of demonstration hereafter,—I must leave our philosophic friend to determine. It is enough for me to have secured from injury, in the Atheistic futurity, my Christian man.

Advancing, however, from this negative statement, I wish you to observe how the thing stands as to what may be the fair, *positive* expectancies of the religiously good man of the present life, in relation to his lot in the next,—that next life being the mere futurity of Nature, but being distinguished by the two properties to which I have referred, and his condition in it having to be determined by his personal state of fitness and preparation for its duties and advantages.

In the first place, as the practical goodness of our religious man really consists in his just living according to Nature, or according to the laws of his whole being,—the physical, moral, and social laws, under which he is placed, to be in harmony with which is virtue;—why, it is very evident that he is exactly in a condition to go on anywhere and for ever, in the same harmony with the same course and order of things, so far as these same laws will be found to affect him. Nothing can be plainer. It is

no matter what originates or sustains his virtue,—no matter that it is nourished and strengthened by a mistaken Divine idea,—the simple fact that he *is* virtuous in the sense explained, is all that is necessary to secure for him a facile and "abundant entrance" on another stage of being, the duties of which, whatever they may be in form, must, in principle, be essentially the same with all that he is accustomed to practise here. But, in the second place, the religious source and principle of his virtue—however strange it may appear to say so, —will be itself a further preparation for the Christian's enjoyment of the Atheistic immortality. Religion, or religiousness, especially as based upon or flowing from Christianity, is the study of the Infinite, contact with all that is great and wonderful, the admiration of the ideal, the impression of the vast, the pursuit of the perfect;—it prompts to longings for moral progress, pantings after spiritual growth, eagerness for light, high hopes of future development. The religious man is required to aim at constant advance and improvement here, as the commencement of what he is to pursue for ever. In scriptural language, he "is to forget the things that are behind, and to press onward to those that are before;" "to grow up into Christ in all things;" to add virtue to virtue, and attainment to attainment; that he may come, in the end, "to be filled with all the fulness of God." Now, I further say that throwing off the *accidents* of the thing, the

supposed mistake of the Christian disciple as to the reality of the objects of his religious belief,—his inward life itself, as originated and sustained by these, is just the thing to fit him for a state of existence capable of becoming a great advance on the present one, and which will be found to be distinguished by the law of progress. After the first shock at discovering the non-existence of God, and seeing how superfluously he was concerned about religion, he will be delighted to find that his religion itself, in spite of its mistakes, was the very best elementary preparation he could have had for coming under the law of his new life.

Now, in contrast with this man, look at the personal preparation of Infidels themselves for this next state. Observe how far *they* would appear to be fitted for such a futurity as their own God may possibly work out for them.

Take the very best case,—the case of one who is in practical harmony with the laws of his constitution and of the social system. We quite admit that he will thus be prepared, to a considerable extent, for that supposed future which nature may have in reserve for us. His preparation, however, is imperfect and partial; it stands related to the first thing that might be found to distinguish the Atheistic immortality, but not the second. He who has spent his life without faith and without enthusiasm; with nothing before him either to stimulate or to sustain hope; with no idea of any personality greater than

himself; no habitual contemplation of the Infinite as associated with virtue; no belief that there was any further development for Humanity beyond the grave, or that there could be any advance on the present life; whose horizon was bounded by the dark curtain that shrouds the sepulchre; and who could not conceive of either action or progress hereafter;—why, this man, with all his preparation for possible immortality, so far as the future will harmonize with the present, can have none at all for it in respect to that second and higher attribute in which it may be a sphere for the further improvement and development of our nature. His habits of feeling and his modes of thought would unfit him for immediate and cordial sympathy with his new circumstances; and, though it should be conceded that he might get over this, it is still obvious that instead of being ready for the kind of duties which would now be his, he would have to undergo a complete change in the entire texture of all that constituted his mental being, before he could receive, understand, or practise the very first lessons of his second life.

If, however, we take the worst case that might be taken here, and consider the condition of the criminal and the vicious,—whether their habits result from their denial of God, or their neglect of religion,—their utter unfitness, in comparison with our religiously good man, for the possible futurity of which we speak, will be strikingly apparent. The wicked,

whencesoever their wickedness, live in the violation of the laws of their being. Impurity, falsehood, drunkenness, theft, and all other vices and crimes, are transgressions of that physical, moral, and social system, which, as a whole, surrounds and incloses us on all sides. These transgressions insult nature, degrade humanity, corrupt, deprave, and debase the soul. The consequence is, that men become dead to every noble aspiration, and have no pleasure except in all that is low and foul. The animal or the Devil gets the masterhood of the man; he is thrown off from all contact with high thoughts; he loses all taste for what would advance and elevate his moral nature; he gets to be satisfied with the poor form of life he leads, to have no aim beyond the profit or pleasure of the moment, and to exult in the thought —or to welcome it, willing to wish it may be true— that he is to lie down at last, and to be no more! Men of this sort will be unprepared for the immortality of nature in *both* respects;—they will find themselves in antagonism with the same laws that they war with here,—and, degraded as they are *beneath* what men ought to be now, they will be but poorly prepared to commence a career actually in advance of all improvement that may be possible at present. Nay; if there be any reality in the oneness of the universe,—any analogy between what Nature is seen to do now, and what she may be expected to do always,—it is as certain as anything can make it, that if there be a future life for man,

simply as the result of natural laws, the vicious and the criminal can only be born into it, as are now born into the present world, the blind, the dumb, the idiotic, and the dead.

IV.

Having thus stood with our Atheistic philosopher at the very foot of the ladder of belief, and having found that even from this point there is to be seen overhead the faint outline of a nebulous film that may one day resolve itself into a second and superior habitation for our race,—and that, if it should be so, our religious man has not only nothing to fear from it, but everything to hope; —having done this, we now make a movement greatly in advance, and place ourselves by the side of the professed adherent of *pure theism.* We get here to a considerably higher elevation. We are taught to expect that at this point we shall be presented with a prospect, as we look forwards, at once great, real, and distinct. Instead of what is *possible* on the Atheistic hypothesis, we are to see what is *probable* on the principles of Deism.

Deism acknowledges a personal God. It believes in His being, perfections, and government. It admits the reality of a moral system; it recognises a law written on the heart, and that, too, by a Divine hand. It regards this law as enforcing obedience, not only by the present rewards of virtue, and by the penalties inflicted on the guilty through the consequences of

crime, but also by the idea of future retribution. It insists on the immortality of the soul,—future accountableness, and a future life. It requires reformation if men have erred; it enforces repentance; and, it may sanction prayer. The idea it forms of a future world is, perhaps, much the same in its general characteristics, as that to which we have already referred; but, it holds a more distinct opinion in respect to man's entering upon it at death, and it has settled the process and adjusted the terms on which he is to be awarded praise or blame.

Its theory is this:—There is a God; the world and man are the effect of His creative skill, goodness, and power; they are both just what they were at first, and have always been, with the exception, perhaps, that evil examples and growing numbers have increased evil; that though man is good, men are bad; and that thus virtue may be beset with greater difficulties than in some distant and less-corrupted ages. Nevertheless, duty is to be attended to; men should be just, pure, upright, truthful, honourable, and beneficent; they ought to avoid and shun everything the contrary. It then adds,—God will reckon with men at death; they will pass into His presence, and, after impartial judgment, will receive at His hands rewards for obedience, or punishment for sin. He is merciful, and will not be severe; considerate, and will make allowance for the frailty of nature, and the force of temptation; but He is just, and will certainly condemn in very flagrant cases. His judgment will

proceed on a comprehensive view of the whole of man's present conduct and character; the virtues and the vices of each individual will be enumerated and compared,—one thing will be set against another,—good deeds against bad and defective,—a balance will be struck, and, according as the one or the other preponderate, there will be a decision. The good will be rewarded, the bad punished. The first, probably by being confirmed in virtue and perfected in happiness; the second, by being sentenced to privations or sufferings more or less severe, most likely of the nature of reformatory discipline, which may bring all at last to obedience and joy.

Such, I believe, is a fair exposition of the Deistical hypothesis,—at least as it used to be held, and as it is still held, I think, by its more respectable adherents. I shall make no remark, at present, on what appears to me as fallacies in its construction. I cannot but observe, however, that there can be no doubt that many persons, not at all Deists by profession, but very much the contrary, have yet no more religion, and no more notion of Christianity itself, than what is included in this sketch of a theory founded on the express denial of revelation.

Looking at the theory before us, just as it is, we again say,—supposing that this should turn out in the end to be the true idea of man's future life, we have no fear but that our religious believer will be found fully prepared for it. He who has done well in the present world, by the culture of the virtues

which are produced and sustained by Christian faith, will be prepared for the next, if that next should be what has just been described, not only as much as the most virtuous Deist himself, but a great deal more so.

To perceive this, take two men, a Deist and a Christian: let each be a good specimen of his class; put them before your minds, and then try to ascertain their respective moral qualifications for entering upon and enjoying that life which the Deist anticipates. Both will be distinguished by similar virtues,—truthfulness, purity, integrity, beneficence, with whatever is required, in general estimation, to constitute personal and social worth. But the Christian, by hypothesis, has some things about him which the Deist has not. These things, however, though they may not be necessary to his favourable reception in that world which we suppose both of them to enter, will certainly not constitute disqualifications for it, but rather the contrary.

In the first place, underlying the secular virtue of the religious man, there is what we call religious or spiritual life; and we must be permitted to say, that in the perceptions and impulses of that life, there is something which gives a depth and purity to his moral emotions, a circle to his beneficence, and an elevation to his standard of right, which may add considerably to the worth of his character. Even if his religion, as a theory, be an error, his religious life is a subjective reality,—its motives and influences are

felt by him, and *may*, therefore, have a substantive result. Without at all pretending that he will be more just, upright, or honourable than the man that has not his peculiar faith, we do say, that there will probably be about him greater strictness of speech and behaviour, and more abstinence from questionable liberties, while there will certainly be more concern for the *spiritual* instruction and elevation of the race. I don't like to attribute too much superiority to the Christian believer over the Deist, in those virtues which they may have in common, though I certainly believe that there will be a great superiority from the element infused into all action by Christian motives. I would rather, however, take the last thing mentioned, which will be admitted to be something peculiar to Christians—concern for the religious welfare of the world.

Beneficence and philanthropy in many beautiful forms, interest in the diffusion of science and knowledge, efforts for the spread of political liberty, anxiety to improve the social condition of men and women in the lower ranks,—all this, and much more, may be seen in those who believe in nothing but what is denominated natural religion. But these very men will smile at the idea of any movement against the enormities of Heathenism,—at solicitude for the removal from the face of the earth of cruel and impure systems of superstition, and occasionally, too, at earnest and deep *Christian* concern for the enslaved and oppressed. I say nothing of their

indifference to what the Christian means by the love of God: nor do I insist on their incapacity to be influenced by certain other motives and feelings, which are supposed to deepen, to elevate, and purify the virtue of the Church. I just say this,—if there be a God, as they strongly protest that they believe there is, nothing surely can be conceived more abhorrent to His nature than the forms of idolatry that prevail in the world; and, however their existence may be accounted for by indevout science, or however it may be acquiesced in by passive philanthropy, seeing that they are what they are, it surely must be a service acceptable to God to try to expel them from the world they contaminate, and to save His children from the degradation they inflict. No such service, however, is attempted to be rendered, either to God or man, by any professor, or any number of the professors, of pure and rational Theism; and it is greatly to be feared, that if the world had waited for the philosophers to deliver it from "abominable idolatries," and to call the nations to "behold their God," we might all have been worshipping, at this moment, in spite of our civilization, some idol of "gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art or man's device;"—as they did at Athens. Now, whatever may be the ignorance or extravagance, the folly, or fanaticism, that are supposed to distinguish, or that even may distinguish Christian efforts to convert the heathen, it will be difficult to deny that the mere fact that such efforts are made, *adds* something to

the virtue of a man, in comparison with one who makes them not. One can easily believe, that in the sight of God, any enthusiasm in such a cause would seem better than indifference. At any rate, no one, I should think, would venture to assert, that, of two men, equally virtuous in other respects, and alike professing to believe in Him "who is the only living and true God,"—no one will assert, that of these two men, when they pass into the presence of the Most High, *he* will be less prepared to meet Him who has endeavoured to extend the knowledge of Him in the world, than he whose idea of religion and philanthropy involved no notion of such Divine benevolence.

But still further. There is a second point to be noticed here. Although Deism may be properly regarded as a religion, and though the idea of religion includes that of worship,—worship, I should say, both private and social, the culture of the divine and devotional affections in the man himself, and the union of numbers in sacred acts, as expressive and promotive of a common piety, the source of advantage to society at large, and a means of drawing the indifferent to God,—although anything of the nature of religion would seem to include or to lead to this, I am not aware of the culture of devout sentiments and habits being characteristic of philosophic Theists. Public worship there certainly is not amongst them, professedly as such. As to what is private, I do not deny the possibility of it; but

it is well known that most Deists profess a philosophy which teaches the uselessness, or objects to the propriety, of prayer; and where such views are held it is much to be feared that worship of any kind is not common. Now, the Christian believer, whatever the particular form of his belief, supposing him to be simply consistent and earnest, is emphatically a worshipper of God,—"a devout man." Prayer is essential to the life of his religion, and the expression of his faith. "In everything he gives thanks." "By prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, he makes his requests known unto God." He "pants" after devotional communion with Him "as the hart panteth after the water brooks." He derives from this, he thinks, a Divine peace, "the peace of God which passeth all understanding,"—something which the world cannot give, and which men of the world cannot comprehend. Now, quite admitting, as we are ready to admit, that, on the hypothesis of Deism, all this culture of the spiritual affections, and these acts of worship and love, *may not be necessary* to secure admission to the heaven it expects, yet, seeing that when God is actually revealed, as we suppose He will be in the next world, in some more vivid and palpable manner than He is at present,—seeing that it surely will be "meet and right" to worship Him *then*,—that the Deist himself will have to begin "to adore and burn" if he never did before,—it can be no disqualification to the devout Christian that he tried to worship and

adore while here,—though it might be with superfluous pains! It will not lower him in the Divine estimation, nor unfit him for the duties of his new life, that he was only too anxious to begin that which he will have to go on doing for ever! The Father of Spirits will not be displeased with His mistaken child because he was too eager to approach Him;—because he wished to express his trust and love, and tried to cultivate—*sooner than he need to have done*—sentiments proper to be encouraged towards the Infinite, and to give to these sentiments such utterance as his faith prompted and his language allowed! The thing really seems so plain that it hardly admits of illustration or argument. For my part, I feel prepared to affirm with strong emphasis, in relation to this second theory, that the man who lives in practical consistency with Christian ideas, will not only be as well, but better, prepared for the future it anticipates, than many, or most of its advocates themselves.

V.

Having now surveyed the probable future of Theistic philosophy, as we formerly surveyed the possible future of philosophic Naturalism, and having seen that our friend need have no fear as to his being fitted for the one or the other, should either turn out the true theory of man's immortality, we make another movement upwards, and arrive at the region of *Religious Belief properly so called.*

We now suppose ourselves to come in contact with the great majority of the race; for every one will acknowledge, whatever may be his own present opinions, that men as men, throughout all time and in all lands, have, somehow, fallen into religion, and have looked at their condition, their duties, and their destiny, through the medium of religious ideas. Let us stand, then, on this broad platform; let us see what sort of a prospect is presented to us from it; what objects are visible, and in what forms and colours they appear when the light that falls upon them is the light of faith, not of philosophy,—they themselves being the revelations, or supposed revelations, of the temple, and not the conjectural pictures of the schools.

We have to look at the future as it has generally presented itself to the human mind through the medium of religion;—at the sort of preparation that would be required for it, supposing that this should prove the true theory of another life;—and then at the chance, on this hypothesis, of a Christian believer finding himself prepared for such an immortality.

It is impossible to do more than just to give a glance at the mere outlines of a thought or two on this subject. It so happens, however, that, as the one or two things which all religions (other than Christianity) have had in common, are those which constitute the points of comparison between them and the Christian system, in relation to our present

subject, the argument may be made, for our immediate purpose, very comprehensive and very brief.

All religions, then, it is to be observed, have invariably taught, by rite or dogma, such things as these:—that human nature was not innocent, not in the same condition it was in at first, but corrupt and polluted; that men were to live in another life, but that from the displeasure of the gods, on account of their wickedness, there were obstacles in the way of their future felicity; that the divinities, therefore, were to be propitiated by sacrifice, and the soul cleansed by some process of purification. For these purposes, altars, victims, and priests, sprinklings and ablutions, abounded; they were everywhere to be met with, as entering into the essentials of religious service. Now, the spiritual idea underlying all this, so far as our present subject requires it to be uncovered, is obviously this:—death will introduce men into the presence of the immortal gods, but to prepare them for that, to enable them to pass into the upper world without fear, they must have their bad deeds expiated by the presentation of an adequate atonement, and their souls washed through the virtue of ritual purifications, and the instrumentality of priestly mediation. The basis of this entire structure of thought would seem to have lain here,—that the ideas of sin and guilt were twined in with those instincts of humanity which originated the idea of a future life. Conscience affirmed the truth

of tradition, and aggravated the apprehension of the Divine anger. Hence sprang vague notions of the insufficiency of human virtue, the miserable condition of the race, the necessity for some arrangement to adjust matters between earth and heaven, and for something like a sanctifying influence on the soul, in order to reinstate man in the favour of the gods, and to fit him for that immortal life which was supposed to await the purified and the good.

There can be no doubt, I think, that these, or something like them, were the elementary ideas which pervaded all the different systems of religion that prevailed in the ancient world. They are those which were everywhere embodied in the altar and the victim, the priestly aspersion and the sacred stream. They are to be met with yet, wherever idolatry prevails, that is, wherever you find *religion* among untaught nations, more or less distinctly indicated. It is thus that significant religious rites, embodying the ideas suggested, stand as interpreters of the sentiments of the race, and reveal to us the profound impressions of Humanity in relation both to the past and the future. They seem to give expression to man's consciousness of some great disaster having once happened to him, of his hope that its effects might be counteracted here, and he himself raised to goodness and happiness in another state,—since they appear to be, themselves, a sort of rude process for meeting the workings of the past calamity, and for securing the future wished-for result.

Of course you all know that that form of Christianity which the religious man of the present lecture is supposed to have embraced, includes in it, according to its own mode of expressing them, all these ideas. We do not at present inquire, whether these ideas are true or false in themselves,—nor whether they constitute the right or wrong interpretation of the Christian books. We don't touch either of these questions just now. The only thing we look at is the fact, which nobody will dispute, that there is such a thing among us as the Gospel, and such a thing as the interpretation of that Gospel according to the Evangelical form of it. Whether the thing itself be Divine, or whether this particular form of it be the right one, are questions we do not at present entertain. It is enough to know that there are men,—and that the religious man of our lecture is among them,—whose faith embraces the ideas to which we refer;—that is to say, who believe that men are sinners; that Humanity is not in its primitive condition, but spiritually dislocated by a fall, and morally defiled by actual guilt; that it has before it an immortal life; that death will introduce it to the presence of God; that to stand before Him without fear, it is necessary for sin to be done away by pardon, and for the soul itself to be purified and restored; that for this purpose, to meet the supposed condition of the race, the Gospel comes with its Redeemer and its redemption, its atoning sacrifice and sanctifying Spirit;—and that, in virtue of what

is accomplished *for* them by the one, and *in* them by the other, they can rejoice in the possession of all that they want as a preparation for eternity. They think themselves the objects of God's mercy, and that they are the subjects of an influence which purifies the heart, which aids them in the pursuit of "all holy conversation and godliness," makes virtue a necessity, provides for their progress in goodness, and has for its ultimate object such a state of feeling and conduct, such an inward and outward life, as shall "make them meet for the inheritance of the saints in light." "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth from all sin." "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost." In these, and such like words, the men we are speaking of utter their beliefs.

If we could assume here the truth and reality of the Christian system, our argument would have to proceed on a comparison between the sacrifices, the ablutions, the priests and services of Heathenism, and the Christian form of the same things,—as to their ability to secure for man that preparation for appearing in the presence and enjoying communion with God, which the two systems, properly understood, alike represent, each in its own way, as constituting the distinction of man's anticipated future life. We

are precluded, however, from doing this, by the nature and necessities of the argument we are pursuing. For anything we are yet supposed to know, the Christian religion is just like every other religion, so far as its objective truth is concerned. The heathen had *their* notions of the gods, of the condition of man, of what constituted acceptable sacrifice, of the efficacy of this, and so on,—and the Christian has *his* notions touching the same things; —but there is no *external reality* anywhere existing, or that ever did exist, answering to the ideas of either the one or the other. Neither of the systems is to be understood as anything more than the impressions of certain minds as subjectively affected by the same sort of thoughts,—the modes in which each class embodied for itself these impressions,—impressions respecting what neither could *know* anything about, properly speaking. Heathenism and Christianity, then, are alike to be understood as this, and nothing more,—as the notions of two different classes of men respecting spiritual things, together with certain outward forms and services by which these notions are symbolically indicated, or in connexion with which they are verbally professed.

Reasoning upon this hypothesis, you perceive, we cannot say that the Christian will be better prepared for the next state, which he and other religionists are supposed to expect in common, because *they* put their trust in lies, while his objects of belief are spiritual facts, actually Divine and efficient, designed

and revealed by God himself for the express purpose of fitting Humanity for that future life of which it is capable, and for which it is made;—we cannot say this, because we are to reason, at present, on the supposition that what is believed by Heathen and Christian alike, as means for preparing man for futurity, is equally *un*-real,—each, indeed, has his ideas of the process of preparation, but there are *only* ideas in both cases. It is to be understood that they may be both right respecting the *nature* of man's future life;—it may be true that that life will be such as to make necessary for our enjoying it—in addition to the virtuous and moral acts which the Deist depends on for acceptance with God—some such merciful arrangement, and some such inward purification, as the two religionists think to be required; but, as to the reality of such arrangement by the one kind of sacrifice or the other, and as to the reality of an internal purification by either outward rites or Divine influence, this is not to be supposed in either case. Each system is to be regarded as only the peculiar form in which the thoughts and feelings of men have tried to embody themselves.

Since, then, all religionists are, by this hypothesis, on a level, as to the truth of their respective systems of religion, though it may turn out that their notions of the *future* may be right, our inquiry now is,—supposing this should prove to be the case, *which* would be most likely, as a matter of fact, to find himself prepared for the future as it is now pictured to us,—the

man who has a Heathen spiritual life in him, or the man that has a Christian spiritual life in him? Granting that both of the systems of religion are, objectively considered, alike unreal, we ask, which of them would be connected with such a state of subjectivity in its adherents,—of thought, emotion, purpose, behaviour,—as would be the most likely to fit them for that kind of immortality which all, on both sides, profess to expect?

It can require but few words to reply to this question. Granting that there is no Divine priest or sacrifice to be put in contrast with the animal expiations and the human priesthood of Heathenism; and that there is no Heavenly spiritual influence, immediately regenerating and sanctifying the soul, to be contrasted with the ritual aspersions and washings of a bodily service;—allowing all this, two questions may be put, the answers to which might throw some light on the general inquiry just indicated; these questions relate, to the *probable* influence on the mind and character of the two systems respectively?—and to their moral results, *as a matter of fact?*

The latter of these questions is one which admits of a reply so directly in favour of what we are prepared to maintain, and so undeniably true, that it hardly seems worth while to entertain the first. It may, however, give greater completeness to the argument to do so. The points for you to observe, then, in relation to the first question, are these:—

What sort of spiritual life would be likely to be produced by a man's believing, and in earnest sincerity acting out, what is taught and enforced in the Christian books;—What sort of a spiritual life would be likely to be produced by a man's believing in any system of Heathenism, and by his earnest devotedness to the rites, sacrifices, and services of the temple;—and, lastly, Which of these two men would be best fitted, by his inward, spiritual life, for a future state, to be spent, let us say, in association with Divine or beatified immortals?

Read the New Testament, and seriously consider what spiritual and moral effects it seems calculated to produce, if sincerely believed and deeply felt. Supposing that it is not true that men are sinners—the assumed ground of necessity for the Gospel—or not so to the extent that it seems to affirm; supposing it is not true that God is offended, or can be offended, by human transgression; supposing that He did not send Christ to redeem the world,—that He does not give the Holy Spirit to renew and purify the heart,—that He does not hear prayer, nor impart daily grace, nor do anything else that Christians suppose Him to do to save their souls and promote their holiness:—still, is it not obvious that the power of what they believe—things which, so far, become realities to *them*,—is it not obvious, that the power over them *for good* of these things must be immense? Will not the New Testament idea of sin tend to keep men from it? May it not reform the character by

leading to repentance, soften the heart by exciting contrition, increase the tenderness and susceptibility of the conscience, and in many other ways constrain an individual to hate evil, and to choose good? May not the thought of "the love of God," in "the gift of His Son," for "the salvation of the world,"—however intangible the idea may be which the statement contains,—yet, as something suggestive of great and affecting thoughts, wonderful in relation to God, deeply interesting in respect to man,—may not this, when earnestly believed and felt, almost act upon the soul as if the objective belief was a reality? Only think what sort of spiritual impressions must be produced on the man who really believes that "Christ died for his sins, and rose again for his justification;" that "He ascended into heaven," "appears in the presence of God for us," and "can save to the uttermost all that come unto God by Him;"—that, as a Christian, he is to show that "the grace of God, which bringeth salvation, teacheth him to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in the world;" that if he commits any wickedness, he is "an enemy to the cross of Christ;" that "he is to be holy as God is holy;" that he is a "temple of the Holy Ghost," because "the Spirit of God dwells in him;" that he is one of a "spiritual priesthood," who have "to present their very bodies as living sacrifices, holy and acceptable unto God;" that deliberate sin would in him partake of the nature

of sacrilege, involving at once the desecration of a temple and the apostasy of a priest; that devout emotions, and pure thoughts, and correct purposes, and all things within him that are good, are from God,—suggestions and results of spiritual influence, an influence to be obtained by prayer, and preserved by watchfulness? Only think, too, of the feelings with which a simple, devout, earnest Christian may hail the Sabbath,—"This is the day which the Lord hath made, we will rejoice and be glad in it." Think of the sentiments that may be nourished by worship, by religious sympathy, by sacramental communion, and by "fellowship in the breaking of bread and in prayers." All these things may be nothing to others,—but how real and affecting are they "*to him that believeth!*" Let the whole of them be supposed to rest on no corresponding external truth,—external to the mind of the Christian himself,—yet *to* him—whose inward being is spiritually and morally moulded by them all—it is very obvious that they must be productive of great and sensible results. One influenced by such supposed truths, and habitually attending to certain engagements, private and public, congruous to them, believed to be "means of grace,"—why, such a man *must* be a person of pure thoughts, holy feelings, great conscientiousness, elevated morality, having within and about him everything you can think of, not only for a character of strong and masculine secular virtue, but for one that should be dis-

tinguished by the presence and the power of a Divine element, which his persuasions and belief would seem so calculated to create. I am not pretending that all professed Christians are what I describe:—I am supposing a person really to be what he professes to be,—to have received, as it were, on his soul (to use the figure of St. Paul) the exact impression of "that mould of doctrine into which he was cast" by the act of believing the Gospel to be true. I am not denying, either, that there may be many things presented to the man's faith, in the New Testament, which are startling and mysterious; and I am ready to admit that there are other things which some persons think (and not unnaturally) must be injurious to morals; but, in relation to these, I beg to assert that plain, devout, Christian men are not disturbed by the one class of things, and that they do not feel or understand the others *in the sense of the objectors;* while, with respect to the general argument, I conclude by affirming that the uniform tone of the Christian books, taken as a whole, is so thoroughly and completely in favour of virtue, founded upon and flowing from "Godliness," and that such people as our own religiously good man, so live and breathe, and have their spiritual being in the light and atmosphere which this tone of the books generates,—that there can be no doubt as to what I have described being the actual result of the belief of Christianity in a multitude of cases, as there can be none of its

being the *probable* result of anything like sincere, earnest, and active faith. I do not at present assert the truth of Christianity; but I do assert the excellence of that inward life and that actual character, which Christianity, whether in itself true or false, is adapted to produce—when thoroughly believed and fairly carried out.

Now, what sort of a spiritual or divine man was Heathenism likely to produce? Supposing its subjects to have had the idea of sin, of Divine displeasure, atonement by a propitiatory sacrifice, purification by priestly rites,—was there anything *likely* to be effected in the way of deep, spiritual impression on the soul and heart, by ideas confined to the supposed efficiency of an external ritualism? Do we know of anything like a grand system of doctrine, that was ever associated with Pagan superstition? Were there ever in connexion with them such views of the Divine character as Christianity would seem to suggest? Were there to be found anywhere, in any temple, or as the record of the facts of any religion, sacred books of such a tendency as to what is pure, virtuous, and devout, as those of the New Testament, the Prophets, or the Psalms? Had Pagans, or have they, rites of worship, with instructions and exhortations connected with worship, likely to inspire holy emotions, to purify the heart, to stimulate to goodness, and to restrain from evil? Let the old worshippers at the ancient temples have been ever so sincere in their belief,—let them have

been ever so conscientious in discharging what we should call their religious duties,—was the *nature* of their beliefs, and the *nature* of their sacred engagements such as, becoming to the men objective realities and habitual service, were likely to produce, to nourish, and to sustain, spiritual life and virtuous habits?

The question of fact may determine this best. Whatever may be the ideas, then, which, philosophically speaking, may be said to underlie all religious systems, and which were, in fact, there can be little doubt, the ideas that originated them; and, whatever impressions the rites of Heathenism might seem adapted to have produced in respect to sin, repentance, purity, and so on;—was it not the fact, that the services of the temple almost universally got associated with infamous practices? Were not the gods themselves habitually represented to the popular mind as if they were the patrons of all wickedness? If it be true, that the gods of a nation will generally furnish its standard of morality, will not that, which was in this way furnished by Paganism, be found to be absolutely and contemptibly lower than what many a Pagan might have made for himself? Did not Idolatry come to look, as if the worst of men had taken hold of their worst passions, aggravated and enlarged them to the dimensions of a god, and then thrown them into the sky to constitute the character of the divinities there,—so that the heavens above us, bending as a beautiful

overhanging mirror, was made to reflect nothing but the most offensive enormities of earth? Did Paganism, as a *religion*, ever pretend to teach morality at all? Had not the heathen to get their notions of virtue rather at the schools than at the temple,—rather from the philosopher than the priest? In short, is it not true, that the language of Peter is as exact as it is forcible, that the religions of the Gentiles were "abominable idolatries;" and is not the statement of St. Paul true, that "it is a shame even to speak of those things that were done of them in secret?" What sort of a spiritual life would theirs be whose very religion was productive, as a matter of fact, only of "the unfruitful works of darkness?" It was not the selfish envy of a rival, the vulgar rudeness of a low mind that had no taste for the elegant and beautiful, and that could not appreciate the graceful polytheism of the Greek,—it was not this that prompted in one who had succeeded in turning many of them to goodness, the burning words—"This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: who, being past feeling, have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness."

"*But*," he adds, "*ye have not so learned Christ.*"

And, in opposition to our exposition of the fruits of Heathenism, we proceed to say that, as a matter of fact, whether itself be a true or Divine thing or not, Christianity has, somehow or other, produced great and beneficial results in the world, on individual character and on society at large. It has enlightened the ignorant, and converted the bad, and raised the fallen, and purified the polluted, and strengthened the weak, and, in every age, wherever it has been allowed to act for itself, and *as* itself, it has been both the producing power and the conservative element of virtue. Where it has been corrupted and debased, till it became a priesthood, a ritualism, and an idolatry, like the Heathenism it subdued, it has often been attended with many of the results of earlier errors, by virtually restoring them in another form. It has nothing to do with this but to lament and condemn it, nor have we anything else to do with it either. Let Christianity be looked at where it has "free course" according to its original nature and aim; where its books are open as the property of the people; where its services include vocal instruction as well as worship; and where it has not been transformed into a mere system of "histrionic" symbolism. Wherever it is regarded as a great, divine, spiritual reality, and acts upon men with the force of that, is it not undeniable that individuals are made by it eminently good,—that the virtue of the Church has to be regulated by rules which the world regards as unnecessarily strict,—and that the

standard of virtue gets elevated and purified, nevertheless, in general society? Why, the secondary or reflex influence of the Gospel has been greatly conducive to the improvement of mankind. In Christian nations, it has influenced for the better the tone of feeling, the principles of morals, the habits of life; it has caused what was done and tolerated in Heathendom, to be condemned and shunned as criminal and infamous; it has extinguished public, sanguinary sports, and has deepened and elevated, enlarged and purified, private virtue. In Protestant countries, at least, the philosopher has had to learn morality from the priest,—the systems of the schools have been less pure than that of the Church. Especially let it be noted—for, however it may have been accounted for, it is a simple fact—that those who have professed what is denominated the Evangelical form of the Gospel, and even those who have included in that certain views and interpretations of doctrine *apparently*, in theory, dangerous to morals,—let it be remarked that among such, more than among other of the Christian sects, people have abounded, who, singularly enough, have been the most devout and holy in their lives, the most precise in their notions of behaviour, the most scrupulous in their conduct, and, in all respects, the most excellent, liberal, and beneficent of men.

Now, if there is any truth in all this,—and I, for my part, believe it, in the main, to be all true; if such be the case,—if the *tendency* of the two things

we have compared be as we have described, and if the *facts* connected with them be as we have described, is it not obvious—to put again our former inquiry—that, *supposing* it should turn out that man's future life is something that will require—in addition to every-day, secular virtue,—purity of heart, spiritual affections, the results of contrition, sanctity, faith, with everything else that goes to make up a real, inward, divine life,—a life, deep as to its foundations in the essence of our being, great in its fruits in the visible manifestations of a godlike man,—if, I say, human immortality is found to be of a nature to require all this, would it not be simply a waste of words to attempt to prove, that, whether Christianity itself be true or not, the man that is true to *it*, will not only be *as well* prepared for the duties and enjoyments of such a life, but *far better* prepared for it, than any other religionist whatever?

I have confined the argument to a comparison of the tendency and results of the Gospel, with the tendency and results of those religious systems which it so extensively succeeded and displaced. I have not thought it necessary to refer to Mohammedanism, and to contrast *its* notions of heaven, and its proposed mode of preparing for it, with those of Christianity. If all be true that is currently reported of the Mohammedan's "idea" of the paradise he expects, the consistent Christian, it would have to be admitted, could not be particularly well prepared for it. He

would have, however, in himself, by the everlasting and immutable laws of the universe, what would contribute to his satisfaction in any world to which he might betake himself, or to which he might be sent, on account of his unfitness for enjoying the society of the celestial aborigines! We don't dwell upon this; for, though it even should be found that there is a little colouring in the popular notions of the Turkish paradise, it can hardly be incumbent upon us, on the score of doing justice to the Arabian prophet, to consider his religion as something to be compared with Christianity by itself. I am well aware, however, that some might think that it has such a claim, not only from some of its supposed peculiarities of belief, but from the fact of its having at its outset superseded certain forms of a degenerate Christianity. I think it enough to say only this one thing;—Whatever may be the true nature and the practical influence of orthodox Islamism, we can hardly imagine that the character of God, or the constitution of things, is such, that *he* will fail, at the last audit, who has spiritually "put on Jesus Christ," if the virtuous man of the Koran and the mosque passes successfully.

VI.

We have now done with comparisons. The argument must assume another form. Having proved, if we have been hitherto successful, that for the possible immortality of Atheism, the supposed im-

mortality of Deism, and the expected immortality of all religionists, our religiously virtuous Christian man will be fully prepared; that he cannot, in fact, find himself *un*prepared for eternal life, seeing that whichever of the three theories referred to should prove to be the true one, he will be in a better condition to face the truth than the several adherents of the theories themselves;—having proved this, one thing more remains to be done.

We have stood here, for some time, on the broad platform of religious belief, along with the representatives of many faiths; we have looked out to see what was to be seen, and we have come to the conclusion, that the Christian believer will be better fitted for a perfectly pure and godlike immortality, if that should be intended for us, than the disciples of any other religion. We now propose to take one step more,—to make another upward movement, and thus to stand on the highest elevation we think it possible to reach;—that is to say, we will go with the Christian to his own peculiar point of view, the place of vision which is exclusively his, and we will stand there for a while with *him*, and with him *alone*. We propose looking from his post of observation, noticing what it *is* that he professes to see, and *how* it is that he expects to reach it. We will then inquire,—not whether his Christian preparation for immortality will best secure his fitness for enjoying it, which would be to fall into the fallacy against which we have been warned, but—which is altogether another question—whether there is not something about the

whole thing—the idea of the Christian futurity and the Christian idea of what is necessary to secure it, —which makes it impossible, or next to impossible, to avoid the conclusion, that the Gospel of Christ is neither a conjectural theory of another life, nor a mere embodiment of the subjective ideas of a number of earnest though mistaken men, but an actually true and Divine thing; the only truth; the exclusively positive or objective reality, in this world of ours, belonging to the subject of the present lecture; that which has been given by God, for the express purpose of revealing to man "life and immortality," and affording him the means of preparation for it?

I am not going to investigate or discuss all the evidences in support of Christianity. That is not required by the duty I have undertaken. I only propose rapidly to sketch a very few thoughts *strictly confined to the subject on hand.* The object of these, as already intimated, will be to show, that there are things about the Gospel, in relation to this great question of a future life,—and perhaps we might say in relation to the still greater question connected with the ground of our preparation for it, which, when thoughtfully looked at, seem to form themselves into *a presumption* that we have really found something like certainty;—which warrant us to believe, that, in Christianity, we have not only an instrument which will prepare a man for any futurity, and thus make him safe on the hypotheses of others,

—but the true idea of futurity itself, the Divine unveiling of that immortal life which awaits the world. If this be the case, it may turn out, not only that the Christian is better prepared than others for what may be behind the dark curtain, but that others might be wisely employed in inquiring whether they are really prepared for it at all.

I shall confine my remarks to the two things which have been already indicated,—the Christian idea of a future life, and the Christian idea of the process of preparation. And here, let it at once be understood, that I take these things, not according to any new or refined interpretation of the Christian books, but just as they have always been taken and taught,—though it may be, with some slight difference of illustration. I especially include in the first thing referred to, in the plain, literal meaning of the words, "the resurrection of the dead;" and I include in the second, the doctrine of mediation;—"the redemption of the world by Jesus Christ;" a direct, supernatural interposition of God, through Him, in order to "the forgiveness of sin," delivery from its consequences, and "the opening of the kingdom of heaven to all believers."

The Christian idea of a future life, is, on the whole, peculiar. It is not that of philosophy, nor that of the religions that prevailed in the world previous to the advent, or contemporaneously with it. The immortality of the Gospel is not simply the immortality of *the soul*,—it is the immortality of *Humanity*. It is

man that is to live hereafter, and whose whole nature, so to speak, is to be perpetuated for ever. The New Testament, indeed, intimates the possibility of a state of consciousness immediately after death, but its great idea is the resurrection of the dead. The dead may not only live as disembodied spirits, but they are to live *again* as men. They are to possess what is termed a "spiritual body;"—a structure, it would seem, so far material as to be distinguished by form and visibility, but in such a sense "spiritual,"—so free from the grossnesses of matter,—as to be without the "humiliations" of the "natural body." It will not be dependent on food; it will perhaps be capable of almost ceaseless activity; it will be endowed with "power," invested with "glory," and "incorruptible." Man will not present, in the next state, what, to some thoughtful minds, is one of the greatest mysteries of *this* :—the *oneness*, that is to say, of an intellectual, moral, and spiritual intelligence, conscious to itself of high aspirations and of the force of strong, irrepressible instincts towards the Infinite, with a nature the same in its impulses and appetites with that of the beasts of the stable and the sty! "They shall hunger no more, neither shall they thirst any more, neither shall the sun light upon them, nor any heat." "In the resurrection, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven. *Neither can they die.*" "We are citizens of heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile

body, (the body of humiliation,) that it may be fashioned like unto His own glorious body, by that power by which He is able to subdue all things unto himself." There are intimations, too, of such a change being wrought on the very world itself, by the purifying fire of the predicted conflagration, as shall fit it for becoming the abode of immortal and glorified humanity. "The heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat. Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." The state of things to which the new condition of men will give rise, and the circumstances by which they will find themselves surrounded, are sufficiently indicated by various suggestive descriptions of the future. Humanity is to be perfectly virtuous; it is to be without sin, and to be freed from the future possibility of sin; it is to be exalted in knowledge, purity, and joy; it is to feel itself in the immediate presence of God; it is to be with Christ; it is to live a life of worship,—worship in unison with other orders of being, as well as according to its own appropriate sentiments; and it is to do everything with so special a regard to God, that its whole being will seem to be absorbed in continued and ceaseless Divine service. Now, this theory of the future, taken as a whole, is, I think, peculiar to the Gospel. The resurrection of the dead, the "change" of the living, the immortality of Humanity, with all that they include, belong to *it*, in

their fulness and perfection, exclusively and alone. I am disposed to say, that the peculiarity of the idea, its tangibleness so to speak, its simple grandeur, its seeming to have about it what appears to meet the demands of philosophy when aided by faith, though, previous to its discovery, philosophy by itself might not have been competent to conceive or suggest it;—I am disposed to say, that these things constitute a presumption in favour of the Divine origin of the thought. If a person were to try to form the most perfect conception he could, of a sublime immortality for man as man,—not simply as a disembodied spirit, but as carrying with him something analogous to his present nature,—he could not form a better one than that of Christianity; and if, in some happy moment, he hit upon this, he would want for its realization all those things with which the Christian future life is to be introduced, and all those with which man is then, according to its promise, to be distinguished and endowed. There is some likelihood, you see, that the Christian theory, after all, is the right one.

With respect to the ground of preparation for this futurity, I select, as I have said, the principle of mediation, because Christianity bases itself on the idea of the sinfulness of the race, the need of forgiveness, and the necessity for something being positively *done* in order to forgiveness being real and effective. Everything in the Christian system follows from this, and flows from it,—the influences and motives that

affect and sustain that virtue which its disciple has to cultivate as a progressive preparation for its anticipated futurity. The whole question, therefore, may be made to turn on this one point:—the Evangelical idea of the *necessity for a gracious supernatural intervention in order to the forgiveness of sin*, and for securing to the sinner a blessed and glorious immortal life.

It is not to be denied that Christianity connects the forgiveness of sin with the death of Christ, teaching, as it does, that "God hath set Him forth as a propitiation, that through faith in His blood men might receive the remission of sins, and God be just, and the justifier of him that believeth." Men may reject Christianity itself because of its so expressly affirming this doctrine; or they may select what is moral and devotional in the Scriptures; in the sayings of Jesus and the writings of the Apostles, and they may call this *their* Christianity; but very few, now-a-days, will attempt to question that in the New Testament, taken as a whole, and grammatically interpreted, the doctrine before us stands as a part, and an essential part, .of that edifice of thought which the writers of the book believed themselves, and which they sought to establish in the world. I must put what I wish to advance here in the most general and comprehensive form consistent with explicitness, indicating only the line of thought, which you can easily find means further to pursue.

The Christian idea, then, of the forgiveness of sin

is, that it is something which required a direct interference with a previously fixed system of law. This system having been established, sin, or the violation of it, must, according to the natural course of things, be followed by punitive results—*by way of necessary consequence.* For these results to be evaded, that is, for positive facts belonging to a man *not* to be followed by what they would naturally and inevitably produce, something must be *done,*—the connexion between sin and the consequences of sin,—which are bound together by the order of the universe,—must be severed;—in other words, there must be a direct interference with the regular, uniform, and proper action of all previously fixed laws;—a miracle, in fact, or something equivalent to a miracle, which can only proceed from Him who is Lord of the universe itself. Observe how the case stands;—it may be put, perhaps, in the most intelligible form, by being presented through the medium of a figure. The great machine of Natural Law, if it goes on acting consistently with itself, must necessarily work the raw material of sinful acts into some terrible future garment for the sinner. If sin is *forgiven,* that must mean, if it means anything adequate to the emergency, that the natural course of things shall be interrupted,—that otherwise inevitable effects shall disappear, and that matters shall be so controlled and bent, that there shall *not* be woven such a web as would naturally be produced, but something altogether different. The sinner shall not come to

find himself clothed with his sins, wrought, in their results, into a poisoned robe to eat into his flesh, the proper effect of the undisturbed operation of law; instead of this, his sins and their results must be virtually annihilated, and there must come to him *that* which would have been the product of innocence or virtue.

Now this new power, in the action and working of the established system of things, is, according to Christianity, communicated to it by *one great supernatural act of God.* It is not the development of some original power inherent in itself, which would only be another manifestation of natural law; nor is it, on the other hand, a distinct putting forth of supernatural energy in the case of each individual which would involve a separate miracle whenever any one obtained the forgiveness of sins. Taking its stand between these two extremes,—recognising the necessity for something beyond nature, but avoiding the multiplication of supernatural acts,—the Gospel reveals the introduction, so to speak, by Divine interposition, of a foreign material into the original system, to be worked and woven for the advantage of those who should become identified with it; or the addition, if you like, to that system, of a new compartment, having power to destroy—for those who take refuge in it from the action of the first—the natural results of their personal transgressions; and not only to destroy and annihilate these, but to weave out at last on behalf of its sub-

jects, according to an established order of its own, what would be equivalent to the effects of the working of the natural system, had they not only never sinned, but perfectly fulfilled all righteousness. This supernatural interference with the system of fixed law;—this introduction into it of a new material, or this communicating to it a new action, or this placing within it a new compartment; or all these together,—took place, "once for all," by "God sending his Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for a sin-offering," that "He who knew no sin being made sin for us, we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." In consequence of this, men are called to repent and believe the Gospel; "whosoever believeth" is, so to speak, identified with Him in whom he believes;—the natural results of his sins will be destroyed so far as eternity is concerned, and instead of his reaping their punitive effects he will reap the results which will flow from what was accomplished for him by Christ. But in addition to the supernatural fact of "Christ dying for our sins," there is established in the world, in consequence of that great redemptive act, a Divine constitution of things, a spiritual economy, within and among the arrangements of earth, which takes up, as it were, all who are brought into contact with it,—and which is adapted also to draw men to itself,—which so acts both for and upon them, as to be adapted to work out a favourable issue *according to a settled arrangement*. There was "once" a direct super-

natural intervention, a miraculous putting forth of the power of God, in order to meet an inexorable necessity;—but that being done, a gracious constitution of things is based upon it,—the supernatural then ceases, so far as direct acts are concerned,—and sin is forgiven (by the annihilation of its results) through the orderly action of the established laws of that gracious constitution, that spiritual economy, which is set up in the Church for the salvation of the world. It is further affirmed, that the state of mind and feeling which brings an individual into vital contact with what was done by the intervention of mercy, and the great system of spiritual influence to which he becomes subject as a Christian believer, and humble recipient of God's grace;—it is affirmed that these together are adapted and designed to destroy the love of sin in the man's soul, to deliver him from its power, to purify the heart, to produce all practical holiness, and so to operate on his habits and character that "the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in him, through his walking not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." The final result is, that there comes to be such a harmony between his state of mind, affections, and conduct, and the everlasting and unchangeable principles of moral order, as constitutes a real, and promotes a constantly growing, fitness for his entering delightedly into the Divine presence, and feeling himself at home in the upper world!

These few thoughts, brief and imperfect as they

are, sufficiently illustrate, as it seems to me, the Christian view of the nature of "forgiveness," the necessity for something to be divinely effected in order to it,—"mediation," "redemption," "meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light," and so on. I have tried to put before you the central idea of the Evangelical system, and nothing else. Theologians have too frequently dwelt on the externals of the thought, figures, and analogies in which it is clothed in particular texts, or by which it has been illustrated by others or themselves. Hence we have had statements in explanation of Christ's sufferings, their relation to sin and to the punishment of sin,—in respect to the limitation or extent of His atonement, according to the smaller or larger number of those intended to be benefited by it,—in fact, a legal, mercantile, or other balancing of one thing with another painfully repulsive, pursued often in such a manner as rather to conceal than to develop the one, simple central truth. That one idea, is all I have wished at present to set forth. It is not necessary for my purpose, that I should inquire into *how* it is that Christ's death, or life, or anything He did, operates to the annihilation of the consequences of sin; it is enough to know the revealed *fact* that Divine interposition was necessary to this result; —that that interposition came in the form of a suffering Redeemer;—and that, whether we understand, or are capable of understanding, the *mode* of the thing, or not, *there it is*;—God, by this super-

natural interposition, effects something which can sever the connexion between sin and its direct, natural results; "*all who believe*, can be justified from all things, from which they could not be justified" through the working of original, fixed law. That is the Christian theory, whether true or not, and however it may be interpreted or explained. I must be understood as having tried only to exhibit *this*,—the theory of the Gospel itself,—not a theory about *it*. I merely affirm what every orthodox Christian believes,—whatever *else* he may believe about it,—that miracle was needed to secure forgiveness; that it came in the form already indicated; and that things, through it, are so arranged, that a miracle is not wrought in the case of every individual penitent. Now, looking at this, (taken thus by itself,) as the central idea of the Christian system, considered as a scheme for preparing the way for man's securing eternal life, I am disposed to say, that there is a good deal about it to make it probable that it is the right one;—just as the Christian idea of that life itself, has a good deal about it to make it probable that *it*, too, is the right theory. So far as the subject of the present lecture is concerned, it will only be necessary to offer two observations in illustration of this statement.

In the first place, Christianity would seem to be so constituted as to meet the vague suggestions and longings of the religious instinct, as it has been manifested throughout all time. Everywhere, as we

have seen, religion took essentially the same form; everywhere it indicated a common apprehension of a common loss and a common peril, and similar ideas of a remedial arrangement. It is at least singular, and most seriously noticeable, that when all the rites, symbols, and institutions, of what may be best termed the *natural religion* of humanity have done their work, that which comes to us as revealed by God, is found to contain the same ideas, only under Divine and supernatural forms. I believe that this is to be accounted for by the fact, that the religions of the heathen were perversions and corruptions of primitive institutions,—of symbols and rites which were divinely appointed immediately on the apostasy, and were intended from the first to be a sort of palpable prophecy of the promised Deliverer, and to prefigure the peculiarity of His redemptive act. The instincts of nature found, in the ideas rudely expressed in sacrifices and ablutions, debased as they might be by attendant circumstances, something which met its inward consciousness, and seemed suited to its moral condition. Christianity has a hold on men from its felt adaptation to their state, especially when their minds are agitated and excited by earnest inquiry after "the knowledge of salvation by the remission of their sins." In this suitableness to human nature of the Christian theory, with the circumstance of its springing from the system itself being, as it were, the spiritual ideal of what was sought and longed for throughout all time, and in all lands,—in this, there is

something, I think, which strongly enforces the claims of the Gospel to be accepted as the authorized religion of the world.

In the second place: Christianity not only falls in with the blind impulses that struggled to express themselves in ancient superstitions, but also with the sentiments, the discoveries or demonstrations, of modern philosophy. That philosophy now teaches, when attempting to argue against religious acts and religious belief, that, properly speaking, and according to the established course of nature, there cannot possibly *be* the forgiveness of sin. It refers to the system of fixed law; it dilates on the fact of the indissoluble connexion between sin and its results; it clearly demonstrates that the idea of forgiveness includes far more than a kind and compassionate feeling towards the offender; it sees that it must imply a Divine act, a supernatural interference with the established and immutable canons of existence, the annihilation by a miracle of the inevitable and necessary consequences of conduct;—and this, it thinks, is not to be expected. It is arrogant to pray for it,—insulting to God to ask Him to *do*, for your personal delivery from the fruits of your own positive acts, what would amount to a supernatural interposition on your behalf, and derange the law or order of the universe! No; things must just take their own course, and the sinner must take the consequences of his own sin. There is no help for it. Evil must inevitably propagate itself; it will exert its influences

on the evil-doer, in punitive results, nobody can tell how long. He must submit to bear them, as well as he can, with such hope as he may find possible that they may come in time perhaps to exhaust themselves, or that something may happen, or be evolved, hereafter, by which he may discover that Nature can relieve him, or through which he may be taught to relieve himself! This is the gospel of modern philosophy. On its own principles it is perfectly just. Christianity, too, corroborates its conclusions, by assuming them as the ground and reason of the relief which it proposes to faith, urges upon sin, and offers to sorrow. Forgiveness, it says, *does* require, because of the fact of an established system of natural law, a *super*-natural, or Divine arrangement, in order to the annihilation of the consequences of crime; and then it announces that what is required has actually been done,—"for what is impossible to man is possible with God." It may not be amiss to go back to the Theories that have been before us of the world and man, especially the first two, and to notice for a moment how they appear, when thoughtfully looked at through the medium of the light in which we now stand. We will test them by the touch of *this one thought*,—supernatural interference, Divine interposition, *departure from the order and course of nature*, mediation, miracle, or whatever name you may choose to give it,—the denial of which is the supposed foundation of all rationalism; the admission of which is essential to the true idea of Christianity.

The Atheistic hypothesis, which denies the Personality of God, and the possibility of a future life for man, cannot of course involve in it anything miraculous in the sense of what is supernatural, because it admits nothing superior to Nature; but it may involve in it what is *un*-natural, and it does so, as I think, to such an extent as is far more incredible than any *Christian* miracle that was ever heard of. Some philosophers cannot believe in the forgiveness of sin, because that must mean, if it means anything, the positive annihilation of the results of action; but Atheism goes a great deal further than this, for it provides for the absolute annihilation of the actors! It annihilates *mind.* According to it, matter is immortal, but mind dies. The one changes its form, but continues to exist as an essential entity; the other is destined to absolute nothingness. Nay, matter is employed in the *production* of mind; it virtually creates it; it brings into existence what masters itself, comprehends the universe, counts, numbers, and measures the stars, is capable of a noble spiritual life, invents God, is the inspirer of holy thoughts and the source of heroic achievement! There is the ever-rolling tide of newly-created minds gushing forth through the action of matter,—this matter never being annihilated, but, through ceaseless changes, remaining the same, invested with the attributes of eternal being; no particle of it is ever lost, ever has been, or ever can be;—but the wonderful entities we call minds, for which all things would seem to have been made, and to which they are subservient, *these all die!*—they are made to be lost, annihilated,

destroyed! that is, they are *wasted;*—the most prodigal sort of waste that can be conceived; and this, too, in a universe in which nothing is wasted; and by the movements and constitution of that Nature whose very soul and essence seem to be *thrift!* In everything else she is penurious; she never wastes a patch or a thread; she preserves her old clothes, her gowns and petticoats, her frills and furbelows, her odds and ends, and bits and fragments; she makes everything up again, contriving to make her cast-off and tattered garments look like new; but,—*she destroys all her children!* She is extremely careful of their dirty frocks and tattered rags, and discoloured ribbons, but she murders *them*,—slays them outright, extinguishes them for ever! What is more wonderful still, she so manages matters that the clothes actually *create* the children! The very same articles may be frequently employed, too, in the same sort of process, in different ages and in many lands. But the children,—the spiritual, intellectual, moral product, —genius, capacity, power, greatness,—all these die and perish, cease and determine, and can have no new existence, no different form of life! Think of it, my friend,—perhaps it never occurred to you,—you the father of that new-born child, who are gazing upon it with such looks of wonder and love; do you know that every particle in that little frame, which seems such a fresh issue from the mint of life, moulded and stamped like a new shilling,—do you know that every particle of it is as old as, aye older

than Noah, or Adam either? that it existed before the flood, and had a local habitation, if not a name, throughout all the long geological periods of the history of the earth? It is even so; but the *mind* of your child is *a new thing;* it is a sort of creation; it is an actual *addition* to the present sum of being in the universe, which the body of your babe is *not;* yet, this wonderful, newly-created thing, which may become a Newton to comprehend all material forms, or a Bacon to invent methods of philosophizing, or a Plato to clothe sublimest thought in the language of the gods, or a Shakespear to depict all the aspects of humanity, "exhausting worlds, and then imagining new;"—*that* must be lost;—it will die, and become *nothing;*—yet, some of the very particles of that body may become the clothing of another soul, and help one day to bring it into the world, here—or at the Antipodes. For that mind, however, to live again?—NEVER! Now, there is here such a miracle of annihilation, or such a series of miracles,—which if not *super*-natural is *un*-natural; —something so like an interference with all that belongs to the ordinary and established system of things, which does not save, indeed, but which literally *destroys* the souls of men, and goes on doing so, everlastingly, age after age;—there is something, I say, here, so miraculously contradictory to the order of the world, that it really does seem to surpass belief! It is not *like* Nature in anything she does. I am well aware how the argument might be retorted

by an application of it to the inferior animals. I am so satisfied, however, of the unique wonderfulness of the human spirit, its essential superiority in comparison with theirs, that I am willing to leave the force of what I have said to the irresistible verdict of your common sense. The idea that the mind of man is the mere foam, as it were, on the ever-moving undulations of matter,—somehow produced by it,—bright, beautiful, sparkling for a moment, and then vanishing away and ceasing to be,—while the material surge remains the same, altering in form, but in itself an immortal and ever-enduring essence, —it *cannot* be! I, at least, have not credulity enough to believe the wonder. He that can receive it,—let him receive it.

The second theory makes provision for the forgiveness of sin on purely natural principles. Nothing is required, it seems, but a little sorrow, a reasonable degree of reformation, or a purpose of reformation, with a belief of the compassionate tenderness of God, and—the thing is done. The kind feelings of the Supreme Parent so dispose Him to overlook whatever has been amiss, that it would appear to be thought a sort of blasphemy to imagine there could be anything in the way to obstruct their exercise, especially if appealed to by the erring children of passion and genius. Unfortunately, these poetical plausibilities, this easy and superficial sentimentalism, cannot be reconciled with any just idea of moral government according to established and definite laws protecting

and guarding the interests of virtue; nor with the regular working out of results, by something like a fixed, steady, well-ordered system. You cannot govern a kingdom, a school, or a family, by indiscriminate tenderness; by arrangements which are to be relaxed at the cry of every offender; whose rules are themselves to be constantly *over*-ruled, their equitable threatenings evaded, as if there was no real connexion between transgression and its consequences. A monarch or a judge, or even a father, in spite both of his own feelings, and the feelings and appeals of those he compassionates, must, for the most part, permit things to take their course; he could not possibly prevent it without violating principles whose preservation and integrity are of more importance, for great general objects, than can attach to the relief of individual distress. There is nothing more manifest, in the facts which illustrate the moral government of the world, than the tremendousness of the consequences which follow particular acts, often a single and apparently trifling act, and which are suffered to evolve, or are even *evolved* with a sort of stern and rigid inflexibility, in spite of cries, reformation, or regret; and, for sin to be forgiven, in any intelligible sense, is, for the results which would flow from it, naturally and inevitably, according to the regular course of things, to be cut off, evaded, or destroyed,—which could only occur by what would be equivalent to a supernatural interference with the order of the universe. "Whether

is it easier to say, *Thy sins be forgiven thee,* or to say, *Take up thy bed and walk?"* One requires *power* as well as the other; the exercise of an attribute that can stop or suspend, or give a new direction to, the action of laws as real and as operative as those that impel and guide the planets. *This,* then, it seems, on the hypothesis in question, is to be expected at any moment;—on very slight, if not the slightest occasions! But a direct interference of this sort with the primary laws and canons of existence, the rules and conditions of being, in every individual case in which men may wish to escape the just and necessary consequences of their conduct, would be a miracle, and nothing less. That is to say, the natural system of things, in spite of its supposed inviolable order, is yet so managed or administered that supernatural *acts* may be expected to interfere with it,—without anything like a very adequate reason, or anything, it is to be feared, like a virtuous regard to the interests of virtue! Men who can believe this, might believe anything. Fully carried out, the theory would make miracle the rule, and law the exception; it would unsettle our faith in the uniformity of nature, and destroy our conviction of the wisdom of goodness. If it be true, we must be living in the midst of multiplied prodigies, and might be excused for suspecting that nothing is sure. This is not likely to be the right idea of the constitution of the universe. As to talking about the "principles" of the Divine government, it does not seem, on this

view, as if there could be much *principle* about it; while, to pretend a necessity for rejecting Revelation from the fear of admitting anything supernatural, would appear to be a very unnecessary alarm;—for, interpreting what they already believe, on strictly natural and scientific grounds, the men's faith could hardly be so severely taxed by God as it is by themselves. They refuse to believe in one great, supernatural act of God, for the purpose of meeting the *un*-natural condition in which sin places the race, (which, because unnatural, it required something more than the original provisions of nature to reach;) —an act which, once accomplished, set up a gracious constitution of things in the midst of the natural, counteractive of otherwise inevitable results by its own settled merciful arrangements;—an act, too, which, while thus introducing what should modify the action of the violated primary law, was, it is intimated, so done as to be in harmony with its principle and spirit, to vindicate its essential equity and rightness, and designed to produce—by the force of something stronger than it (since it had become "weak through the flesh")—what it was *itself* originally constituted to secure;—and all this, in a way corroborative of the loyalty of obedient natures, and conservative of the authority and the interests of virtue in all worlds. This is the theory of the Christian doctrine of the forgiveness of sins,—I had almost said the philosophy of it,—only expressed in a way less theological than usual. The

advocates of a soft and sentimental philosophy, an easy accommodating theism, cannot believe it;—they cannot believe it because it involves the idea of a tampering by miracle with the laws of Nature;—men, who have faith to embrace what makes Nature herself supernatural!—provides for miracles every moment!—and does so, too, in a way which, when philosophically examined, seems much more likely to encourage sin than to prevent it, being adapted apparently to give confidence to guilt, to be a "blow" to the goodness of superior natures,—to that of Humanity "a delusion and a snare."

By thus rejecting—for alike making too great a demand upon our credulity—the Atheistic theory of things, and that of the Deism of poetry and sentiment, we are reduced to the alternative of a definite choice between Philosophic Fatalism and Evangelical Christianity. Either everything is fixed, constant, changeless;—everywhere, and always, *natural* law, and nothing *but* natural law;—law, reaching its object with undeviating precision, and clenching it with terrible effect;—the *consequences* of sin being no more possible to be annihilated than *sin itself*;—sin, which once a fact is a fact for ever, whose results are as certain to follow and flow on, as *that* which they flow from certainly *was*;—either the constitution of things is this, and we are thus living under a fixed, rigid, inexorable system,—which really *itself* becomes to us God, though an infinite Personality be professedly believed in,—either this is the case, or

God has interposed to save the world;—it has not been impossible to Him to do something to meet the case of the transgressors and violators of law;—law, under which all moral intelligences, or every new order of such, necessarily find themselves,—the instrument of simple, primary, natural probation,—which may be broken because it may be obeyed;—either this system stands inviolate, and must take its course in every case and on every culprit, or God has interfered, and, of His mercy and grace, His parental tenderness and abounding compassion, has found means *superior* to Nature to accomplish what surpassed her original intention. Law, as law, can only secure life by being fully obeyed; violated, it is powerless except for appropriate, punitive results; it cannot *give* life; those who need that, have placed themselves in its power,—it can only, for such, "work out death." To extricate them, some new, redemptive arrangement is necessary, which none but God can establish, and which nothing but miracle can introduce. Is this possible? Has it been done? Has it, as Christianity affirms, been so done as to combine that interference with natural laws which was unavoidable, with as little as possible of miraculous expenditure? If so, then, the one great thing on which all turned being accomplished, and a merciful mediatorial dispensation set up, a distinct miracle is not necessary in the case of each individual receiving forgiveness,—or, in other words, being saved from the natural results of transgression,

—for, to the penitent and believing, the effect is secured according to law—the law of the spiritual economy. Penitence, contrition, prayer, hope, are respectively available or possible now. Sin can be pardoned, holiness promoted, immortality anticipated, on a principle, which unites belief in the uniformity of nature with faith in the clemency of God; which "magnifies law," and yet reveals love; and which, by the way in which it provides for a sinful intelligence what is equal to the necessities of its singular condition, meets and satisfies the scruples and demands of a somewhat exact and rigorous philosophy.

Between these two systems, then, we have to take our choice,—that which makes Nature the God of God, and hands us over to its tender mercies; or that which, while admitting the primary fixedness of the natural constitution of things, yet believes it to be likely that He who made it is still master of it,—that it is possible for Him to interfere with it if He please,—and that, if necessity required, He would do so, for the attainment of ends worthy of Himself. This latter system, theory, hypothesis, or whatever else we may yet for a moment or two continue to call it, is far more accordant than the first, with all that we can conjecture of the Divine character. Both stand on the same ground; both alike maintain the absolute necessity for something like a supernatural act on the part of God, *if* sin is to be forgiven in any real or efficient sense. The one stops at the demonstrated necessity, and can go no further. It sees nothing to

encourage hope; it cannot admit the possibility of relief in the way indicated; it resigns itself, therefore, to the natural action of surrounding forces, to bear whatever they may work out, and to take such relief, as, one time or other, they may perhaps bring. The other admits the necessity to be demonstrated;—states it and accepts it,—but accepts it for the purpose of proceeding to establish something upon it—something interposed by combined wisdom, compassion, and power—to meet the emergencies of an offending race. We are not left to darkness, ignorance, hopelessness, and despair; we are assured of the benevolence, the notice, the grace, the purposes and acts of our merciful Creator. "God is love." "Herein is love; not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." "Sin is the transgression of the law;" "lust having conceived bringeth forth sin, sin being matured bringeth forth death;" *but,*—"this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son." "All have sinned;" "the whole world is guilty before God;" *but,*—"when we were without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." "What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, *God* hath accomplished by sending his Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for a sin-offering." "God so loved the world, that He gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." "Our Saviour

Jesus Christ hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel." "In Him we have redemption, through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins." "It behoved Christ to suffer—that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations." "Christ gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time,"—"for God will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth." "Let us come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help us in every time of need." "The Spirit helpeth our infirmities." "Strengthened with all might in the inner man," "by the supply of the Spirit," we can bring forth "the fruits of holiness," "lay hold on eternal life," and secure "an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

It is needless to multiply quotations. These are thrown together, as my memory supplies them, to illustrate some of the statements we have been making, and some of the principles we have been reasoning out. You cannot but observe, how in all its strongest and most characteristic expressions, the Gospel recognises the necessity which Philosophy now professes to demonstrate,—if not to have discovered. Where Science, however, can only despair, Christianity announces deliverance and hope. It proceeds to erect a spiritual economy to dispense its blessings and attain its end. It does not teach

us that mere Nature can transcend itself,—providing for miracles without limit; nor does it direct each of us to expect a separate interference of God in our favour. As already indicated, too, it falls in with the irrepressible longings of the religious instinct, and seems to present to it the ideal of that which it was blindly "feeling after" throughout all time. We might go on and refer to the various external evidences in favour of the Divine origin of the Gospel,—but this would be beyond our province at present. We are content, therefore, to stop at the point we have now reached, and *to profess our conviction,*—on the ground of what has been sketched and suggested,—*that we have found at last certainty and truth.*

Standing here, then, with the Christian disciple, on *his* platform of belief and hope, we have got, we think, to something that is real and substantial. The Gospel is the true religion of man;—the immortality it reveals is our future life. We have emerged from the thick, deep darkness where we first stood; we have left far behind us the second position to which we toiled; we have disentangled ourselves from the rabble of religions that crowded about us at our next ascent; and now,—here we are,—looking to the distant, the spiritual, and the future, far above the level of every other faith, in the clear light of the Christian revelation, and with the steady gaze which it at once requires and supplies. This place of vision, to which we ascended when we last moved,

has become a peak of "the delectable mountains;" we can see "the land which is very far off;"—"the glorious land;" "the heavenly country;" "the new Jerusalem;" "the city that hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." There it is!—clearly visible to religious faith,—beautiful and distinct as a new-made world,—"ETERNAL LIFE;—*the gift of God through Jesus Christ:*"—Glory, Honour, Incorruption, Immortality; all are revealed to us,—all are there! Look at them as they lie in the Divine sunlight; in that resplendent place, brought within the reach of the sinful and the lost;—that home of the redeemed;—the ultimate inheritance of the "saved" from among men,—the regenerated, the holy, and the good! Christianity is no longer a theory among theories, a subjective hypothesis, one form of utterance among many of thoughts and feelings common to man. It is God's truth. It is the revealed system of mercy and aid. "Jesus is the Christ;—the Son of God;—the Redeemer of the world." All the future connects itself with Him. "Life and immortality" are alone to be apprehended by religious faith, and by *that* as modified by Christian ideas. Religious virtue—the holiness of the Church—is essential to the enjoyment of the upper world. Now, then, we can see *how that same thing which can make this life beautiful and great*, will not only prepare us for any futurity that may possibly be, but *is the only preparation for that futurity which will certainly be revealed.* The

Gospel is the best thing for both worlds. It can teach us to make the best of both. God wills the happiness of his children both here and hereafter. "*Godliness is profitable for all things,*"—and profitable everywhere,—"having the promise of THIS LIFE, and of THAT WHICH IS TO COME."

PART VI.

PARTING WORDS—EXPLANATORY AND PERSUASIVE.

PART VI.

PARTING WORDS.

I HAVE thus sketched, and in some measure filled up, the outline of an argument on the proposed subject. I submit it to your consideration and your candour. It embodies some of the results of my observation of life and my knowledge of the world, and some of the conclusions to which I have been led by frequent and anxious thought on the philosophy of religion. It may possibly be of some little use to you young men, who have the great experiment of living to begin, and who may be called to examine both the nature and the foundations of your faith. I feel that I must now hasten to a conclusion. Permit me to do so by adding two or three remarks, explanatory, illustrative, and practical.

My object has been to "bring my thoughts into the form of a little treatise on the ethics of common life, and the ways and means of ordinary happiness,"—as suggested by Horner to Jeffrey. I have not the folly to suppose that I have accomplished anything equal to what we should have possessed, had the great writer alluded to given to the world what

his friend recommended. But however little I may have approached that, I do not think it unbecoming to say, that I have associated "the ethics of common life," and "the ways and means of ordinary happiness," with religious faith, Christian ideas, and a future world, more intimately, perhaps, than might have been done by the late distinguished editor of the "Edinburgh." Whether I have done this wisely and successfully, is not a question for me to entertain. It is enough that for those whom I wish to benefit, it was a right thing to *attempt*; and, indeed, that without such attempt, any discourse on "ethics" and "happiness" would be essentially imperfect.

I have throughout intimated by my habitual phraseology, and my modes of reasoning, that I connect everything, both "in common" and in "religious" life, with the idea of law;—with the natural course of things, or the usual order of Providence, in the one case; in the other, with settled, gracious, spiritual arrangements. I wish you young men to understand this,—and to understand it in relation to "both worlds." In respect to one as well as the other, it may contribute not a little towards saving you from perilous procrastinations, presumptuous sins, deceitful hopes, irrational and criminal indifference;—and from fears and apprehensions contradicted by experience, unsanctioned by Scripture, displeasing to God, and obstructive alike to faith and peace, to conviction and virtue.

Dropping, in these few last remarks, everything of the nature of hypothetical reasoning, suffer me to impress upon your heart and conscience, in positive, direct, earnest speech, some of the principles we have established or illustrated, and, in this way, at once to intimate and urge the practical conclusion of the whole matter.

By your mixed constitution as human beings, you are naturally placed under three great systems of law,—the Physical, the Social, and the Spiritual. Each of these is fixed and inflexible. They can all be transgressed; and if, in any, things take their course, breaches and transgressions cannot but be followed by punitive results.

Violations of the physical laws, injure the body;—of the social, the character;—of the spiritual, the soul. For the punishment of transgressions, as just intimated, it is not necessary for anything to be actually done, or directly inflicted, by God. Things take their natural course, and they work out, by necessary consequence, suffering, sorrow, and death. Vice, or the violation of physical order, destroys health; crime, or the violation of social order, ruins reputation; sin, or the violation of spiritual order, separates the soul from God. The first may end in an early grave; the second in disgrace, in exile, or on the gibbet; the third, in future irremediable condemnation. In respect to the first two, it is no matter what men believe or disbelieve, or even

whether there be a God to believe in, or not,—there is Nature with her *facts*, and that is enough; as facts, the things indicated stand fully and palpably revealed before us. With respect to the third, although the Divine existence is asserted and religious faith required, the result does not depend on any positive act on the part of God; still, things only take their course, and go on to their natural issues; —to *prevent* this, is what would require something to be *done*.

Remark, also, that obedience to *one* set of laws, and the enjoyment of the natural rewards of such obedience, will not save a man from the punitive consequences of *another* set which he transgresses. A libertine may be upright and honourable in mercantile transactions; he will be respected and trusted in matters of business, but—his vices may destroy him, nevertheless. A rebel, or a murderer, may be abstemious and chaste; he will be beheaded or hanged in—high health. A rejector of Christ, a disbeliever in God, may be chargeable with neither vices nor crimes; he may live long, enjoy much, and have a reputation in the world for his secular virtue; but—he may wake up, in another life, a purely spiritual life, to find himself, as a spirit, incapable of sympathy with the society and the objects, and unfit for the duties, of the world of light!

Now, all this, mind, is nothing whatever, but just the working out, in each case, of natural laws,—for, you will remember, that the spiritual laws which

surround and encompass us as creatures, as beings endowed with the religious capacity and distinguished by the religious instinct, are just as *natural* in themselves, and as much belong to Nature, as those of the physical or social systems. Men's relations to God, as spiritual beings, are *as* real as their connexion with a body, or their relations to each other; and they are deeper and more durable than either, for they can be conceived to exist, in all their integrity, if a single human spirit, out of the body, was existing in the universe alone with God. Observe, also, that the relation of these systems of law *to each other*, according to the natural constitution of things, cannot but be this,—that the spiritual is the greatest of the three, and includes under it the two others, but that they, of course, cannot include or comprehend *it*. Hence, violations of the inferior, are violations of the higher;—but obedience to them, is not, in itself, obedience to it. That is to say, vices and crimes are *sins;* but mere freedom from either, or from both, is *not* "holiness."

Now, mark what your Bible teaches you, and what your consciences will confirm. It is not said that all men are either vicious or criminal; but it *is* said that "all are sinners;"—for "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God," and "the whole world is guilty before Him." Ungodliness, the violation or neglect of spiritual laws and duties, being out of harmony with these,—this is what is charged on all men; not that every individual upon

earth has practically committed all sorts of open sin. Many, indeed, have added wickedness to ungodliness; but it is quite possible for a large amount of what is highly valuable in relation to the world, and very beautiful too in itself, to co-exist with an utter destitution of spiritual life. The good man of society may both serve and adorn the earth, and yet he might find himself thoroughly out of his element in heaven. "*Enter into my joy,*" might be as painful and repugnant to his feelings, if they were possible to be addressed to him, as may now be the words—in any deep, earnest sense—"*let us pray.*"

Now, don't be revolted by these statements, as if they were something savage and inhuman,—the narrow bigotry of theological exclusiveness. They are the unavoidable results of fair and exact reasoning; and what is more, they show the greatness of our nature,—the attributes by which we are distinguished as spiritual and religious beings,—the high sphere to which as such we belong,—the duties of which we are capable,—the end for which we were made. We are not creatures endowed simply with intellect, power, skill, taste, or even the moral faculty—so that we can subdue the earth, and build houses, and cook our food, and embellish life, and live in society, and multiply present comforts and enjoyments; but we are also such, that, whatever we may do, or whatever we may enjoy, while acting in harmony with the systems of physical and social law, it is possible for us, in

spite of it all, to fall far short of our own proper, noble, divine life;—for "man's *chief* end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him for ever." It is because man's Present and Future might be so great, that the misunderstanding of the one may be so perilous to the other.

You may next notice, how different points and processes, in the two lower spheres of law, may be fixed upon and referred to as *analogies* illustrative of what may be conjectured to be the course and constitution of things in the higher. One will say—"It is only in very extreme cases that serious physical evils are incurred, or men exposed to public punishment. The probability, therefore, is, that only very great sinners, of any sort, will find their sins pursuing them hereafter with punitive results. With respect to others, it is to be observed, that, both in the natural constitution of the body, and in the natural relations of social life, there is a curative power, which works efficiently against the consequences of minor transgressions,—it throws them off, in both spheres, when men alter their habits, or when they indulge and express different sentiments; reformation or apologies put things right, preventing what might otherwise have come to be serious, as the ultimate results of personal indiscretion or social wrong. It may be the same in the higher sphere." Others may say,—"Sin is no trifle; there is no man living whose spiritual condition is only

slightly affected by it. It is to be observed, therefore, that proper analogies to it can only be furnished by serious cases in the lower spheres. In these, then, where serious infractions of physical and social law have taken place, it is obvious, that something is needed to arrest their consequences which amounts to a direct interference with Nature, though it must be conducted in harmony with her primary principles,—in the one case some medicinal application, in the other some legal arrangement. In neither case, can either sorrow or reformation avail of themselves without these; even with them, if successful, some permanent results may remain. Sometimes nothing can be done,—even *they* are powerless,—and things inexorably take their course. Now, it is thus, or it may be so, in the higher sphere. Sin, in one sense, is disease, or it engenders disease; in another, it exposes to equitable condemnation; to prevent the results it would naturally induce, more is required than either sorrow or reformation; there needs both a medicinal application and a legal arrangement; and these are just the things which the Gospel is interposed to furnish,—the redemption of Christ being the ground of acquittal, the influence of the Spirit quickening the soul, restoring or producing inward health." To all this, again, others might reply—"The analogy is just, as far as it respects the nature of sin, its influence, tendency, and natural results; but the medicine and the arrangement are both within the individual himself.

Repentance heals and gives health to the sick soul; a change of habits, moral reformation, makes amends for iniquity. It is thus that there is substituted for what *would have* resulted from past acts, what will *now* result from feelings and acts of a different kind."

There is no end to analogies, or supposed analogies, which may thus be made out between the constitution and course of things in one department of natural law, and the constitution and course of things as it may be in another. Some of these analogies have, I think, a good deal in them; other some, not so much. But dismissing them all, or leaving them to stand for what they may be worth, I want to fix the minds of you young men on one great fact in the social system which cannot be denied, and which, as involving a principle that may possibly belong to our whole nature, may have in it something to instruct, to warn, to admonish, and to guide.

I have referred, in the previous argument, to the constitution of things being such that sin must work out, by way of natural consequence, punitive results; and that, for these to be evaded, the connexion between sin and its necessary consequences must be severed, a thing which requires an interference with the order of Nature, or something *super*-natural. This I have maintained, and this I do maintain, is the theory of the Gospel,—the glad tidings which announce the fact of God's gracious and merciful interposition to

save the world. Now, while admitting the truth of the first statement—the necessary connexion between sin, and its punitive results on a spiritual nature—some might be disposed to argue, as has just been intimated, that such results, however much they might affect, by way of natural consequence, the condition and happiness of that nature, so long as sin was persisted in or unrepented of; yet, *if* the sin should be given up and a new state of feeling cherished, then, equally by way of natural consequence, would the first class of results cease to be generated, and another and a different class be orderly wrought out. If so, then Nature would seem to have within herself all that is required, and would have herself provided, in her original constitution of things, for that alternative, which Christianity asserts, and which philosophers argue, something supernatural is required to effect. There is about this statement what, at first sight, appears reasonable. But now, I want you young men to look at sin, in an aspect different from any that has hitherto been explained,—an aspect particularly claiming the attention of the young, and which, while fraught with a solemn and appropriate lesson to them, may throw a little further light on the necessity we insist upon for some direct act on the part of God, as well as for some change of feeling in man, if the natural results of sin are to be escaped

What I refer to, *is, the tendency of sin in one man, to produce or occasion sin in another*, and so on, inde-

finitely. This may be the effect of deliberate design, or of undesigned but necessary influence. "*He shall give Israel up,*" said the prophet, "*because of the sins of* Jeroboam, *who did sin, and who made Israel to sin.*" Two hundred years and more after Jeroboam had gone to his grave, *his* sins, as well as their own, were visited on his people; there was a recognised connexion between *him* and the crimes of a comparatively distant generation,—the punitive consequences then wrought out being the product of both. There is a principle here I want you to see. Consider well what you have before you, in this complex and many-sided statement. Observe, that there can be no doubt about the *fact,* that sin in one man does produce sin in another; there can be no doubt either, that, once begun, the process may go on indefinitely,—there is no stopping it,—a man may live in the world, long after he is dead, in the form of an active, baneful influence, which shall deprave and corrupt successive generations. It is a simple, plain matter of fact, too, that this could not be prevented, according to the natural constitution of things, except by a miracle, or a series of miracles, the most extraordinary. Whatever might be the change in a man himself "who had sinned and made others to sin,"—and whatever the effects of that change on his own soul, and his own spiritual state,—*this* could not by possibility reach the destructive march of what he had put in motion,—a power still identified with *him*—going on its terrible way, seducing and cor-

rupting and destroying others! The next world we call the world of light; we believe that in it men will have clearer and intenser perceptions of the right and the true than they have here;—that they will have a complete knowledge (or may have) of what they *did* in the body; and that they may also know what they are *continuing* to do by their perpetuated influence. Without insisting on this last particular,—just imagining a human spirit to pass into eternity with all the faculties it had here capable of full and efficient exercise,—it is difficult to see, on any natural principle, how such spirit,—conscious of having seduced and corrupted others, and that the results of its sin must be still propagating themselves by successive injuries momentarily inflicted upon new victims—it is difficult, I say, to see how that spirit, whatever change for the better may have passed within itself, could possibly enjoy, or permit itself to enjoy, one moment of repose or peace, until the very last and most distant consequence of its sin was blotted from the universe! And when could that be? If the world is to be eternal, the evil will be going on for ever;—if it is to come to an end, and if all human spirits are thus to have the opportunity of re-acting for the better on each other and themselves, where is the proof of any provision for this being made by *nature?* How long would it take, by this process, to restore all men to virtue and happiness? Nay, how could it *begin* without a miracle,—a miracle as great as the instantaneous creation of a world?

That I am not pushing things too far by this line of remark, just take a strong case, like that of Jeroboam, though of a different kind, illustrative of the principle which would seem to be a part of the constitution of nature. Take the case of a profligate and abandoned man of genius. Suppose him to write tales and poems, sonnets and songs, of most exquisite execution, but all terribly and intensely bad;—of such a character as to be at once the most fascinating in their attractiveness, and the most corrupting in their tendency. These, then, are the living and permanent forms, the many-voiced embodiments, of his sin. They are *himself*, as he is to be known by, and to come in contact with, other men and other times. They proceed from and are connected with him; they live by his life, act through his power, speak in his words. Through them he comes into *direct* contact with other minds, and will do so while the world lasts, or his land's language. His sin is not so much propagated from one to another, his connexion and responsibility becoming less and less as generation after generation comes to have *its* distinct share in the guilt; *he*, through his writings, his visible, permanent speech, is in *immediate* contact with *every* generation, as he was with his contemporaries, and personally and directly seduces and corrupts. And this, you observe, cannot be helped. There is no possibility of avoiding it, unless it be by burning the world, and even that might not be enough. The man's influence can

cease neither when he dies, nor when he repents and is converted, and wakes up into a spiritual and divine life, supposing *that* to occur,—unless God was to work a miracle to the extent of annihilating all his printed books, and all the impressions they had ever made on any individual,—the words they had deposited in the memory, the thoughts they had occasioned, the feelings they had excited, the acts they had prompted, or the results of all these! The world must be made into what it *would* have been if the man had never been born! Neither his death as a man, nor his being "born again" as a regenerated man, could have the least influence in putting an absolute stop to what he had set in motion;—nothing could do this but the complete subversion of all natural order and of all settled law.

Now, I wish you to observe that among the consequences and results of this man's sin, there is not only to be included what his own state of mind *was*, (which, it is supposed, may have been altered and purified by contrition, and sorrow, and change of feeling,) but here are continued results *beyond* himself, which nothing *occurring within him* can reach; and, in proportion to the fineness of his new feelings, the exquisiteness of his fresh moral perceptions, would be the terribleness, one would think, of the action and re-action within and upon him of his knowledge of this fact. We say this on the supposition of his conversion here; but in the next world, his moral and spiritual nature will be still more alive

to every fine impression and impulse; his views of himself and of his earthly doings larger and deeper; his knowledge of what he continues to do, *may* be clear and distinct,—his *conjectures* respecting it cannot but be ripened. On any *natural* principle, according to any law, or any system of law that we call natural, how can it be possible for this man to enjoy one single moment of repose, with these results of his sin ever going on? As long as *they* continue to flow here, there must be, it would seem, necessarily and inevitably, a parallel and correspondent flowing into his soul of thought and emotion perfectly indescribable; and, till the one ceased, there appears to be no *natural* termination possible to the other. As to this world, the man "being dead, yet speaketh," —speaketh with effect, so as to poison the minds, to corrupt the hearts, and ruin the souls of thousands in every generation, and, it may be, in many lands. Improved facilities for the production and diffusion of his personal utterances, of that which constitutes his living presence, his influential power in the world,—these only increase the evil he began, augment and aggravate it; his guilt, thus ever on the increase, might be expected to be felt by some corresponding sympathy in himself. The more you look at the matter in this light, the more you will see what serious results may flow from sin, through its tendency to propagate and perpetuate itself.

I have taken an extreme case; but the principle in it belongs to all cases. Every man's sin has,

more or less, influenced others, and *led* to sin. The sum of vice, crime, wickedness, impiety, at any one time existing in the world, is not only the product of the existing agents, but belongs partly to those who preceded them. Bad men make bad men. Tempters seduce, and the seduced become tempters in their turn. Many sins require associates; those yet innocent, are continually being beguiled by the experienced in iniquity. Thus the process goes on. Once committed, sin lives and acts for ever. Every man has a personal connexion with the remotest result that flows from his sin. Others have their own separate responsibility and individual guilt; but, to the eye of God, the line may be visible that connects an act committed at this moment, with the influence of some one who has been in his grave a hundred years. There is no power in nature to stop this course of things. Moral means can but feebly arrest it, if at all. Very great sinners mostly die without so thinking of what they have done as to care about counteracting it, or to realize the influence they leave alive behind them. Even if one such should come to a better mind, and turn resolutely to God himself, there is no ground for thinking, that, to any large extent, he could undo what he had done, *if he were to try.* Let such a man assemble together all whom he had influenced for evil, whose faith he had overthrown, or whose morals he had debased; let him tell them of his change of opinion and habits,—his contrition and tears; let

him beseech and entreat them to repent, and pray, and return to God;—he would probably be met with laughter and scorn, be derided for his meanness and hypocrisy, reproached for the influence he acknowledged and lamented, and find that it was far more difficult to recover than to corrupt. But it is impossible for any one to make an attempt like this. Before such a man awakes to a sense of what he has done, those whom he has injured by his sin are mostly beyond his reach. Some are lost sight of, some forgotten, some at the Antipodes, some dead; the idea of destroying his own work is felt to be hopeless, the thing is impossible; but the work itself is in the world, going on, still acting and producing results; it may do so for ever,—and always, in the sight and feeling of his conscience, with a distinct, actual connexion with *him*.

Now, if the forgiveness of sin has to include in it the actual annihilation of *all* results, all the consequences of a man's acts, their influence on others as well as on himself, it is really difficult to see how this is possible without such an interference with the system of things as would amount to its entire stoppage, if not something more. It is very obvious too, that if we are not to be given up to hopelessness, and despair, and everlasting exposure to painful and punitive thoughts, there must be some merciful interposition of God to save us from ourselves; something so far equal to the emergency as to make it possible for a sinner, in spite of the

immortal nature of sin, to hope, to enter into partial rest and peace here, and to be capable hereafter of blessedness and joy. We believe, as we have said, that the Gospel is just that thing. I do not argue that;—I am now speaking to you on the ground of our mutually admitted Christian convictions. The Gospel, then, we say, meets our case. We are persuaded that, through it, a new, gracious, supernatural system of law has been made to surround, envelop, or mingle with the natural; and that—for those who take refuge under it, and become subject to its processes—it can do what nothing else can, and what something *must*, if men are to be saved. That is to say, though it will not annihilate the results that may flow from vice or crime in the present world, to men's bodies, fortune, or even life;—and though it will not interfere to stop the results of their sin, as they work themselves out on other minds;—it yet does, in some marvellous manner, so come in between the soul of the sinful man (when penitent and believing) and the spiritual consequences of his sin to himself, as to save him from fear, soothe his agitation, impart to him a calm, deep peace, and encourage him to expect, with "assurance of hope," an immortality of blessedness in a future world.

Now, what I have detained you for, beyond the completion of the argument itself, which I had not thought of exceeding, was not to raise the question of the truth of this, or to reason in its defence,

but, *assuming the truth* of what we have thus further illustrated of the nature of sin and the economy of the Gospel, to urge upon you young men *two* things, in a few practical, parting words.

In the first place, *beware of evil of all sorts, sin of all kinds,* from the demonstrated fact that there is such a tendency in sin to propagate itself, and such an indissoluble connexion between its first agents and its remotest results. Beware of designed and of accidental influence by which you may become "partakers of other men's sins." You don't know what you may do when, by word or act, by speech or behaviour, you affect for evil another soul. By a trifling expression, a glance of the eye, a curl of the lip, a shrug or a smile, a man may awaken doubt in the mind of a simple Christian youth, or suggest an unhallowed thought, or confound and repress moral courage, and, in many ways, injure innocence, and endanger virtue. Think of what anything of this sort may grow to. Consider with yourselves, what immense results, and what a long line of them, may flow from such slight beginnings. A little, wrong act,—a light, careless utterance, may deposit a seed in some heart, which shall bear the fruit of far greater sin than any which the sower of the seed commits,—and *he,* remember, may have a fearful interest in this fruit, and in *its* seeds and their growth too, throughout all time! Think, if you injure others by your influence, how impossible it may be for you ever to undo it; how

the bitterest tears you may shed on repentance will be those that flow from the thought of this fact. Recollect, that this thought may darken the world to you as long as you live; and interfere with your enjoyment of the hopes of religion, and compel you "to go softly all your days, in the bitterness of your soul." Think, how the idea of your being *capable* of repose even in the upper world, may seem to be a thing that can hardly be believed,—that the hope of it can only be indulged on the ground of such a merciful and marvellous interposition on the part of God, as, however admitted and rejoiced in as a revealed fact, still leaves the possibility of joy a mystery and a wonder!

In the next place, *I want you to leave nothing to chance.* I want you to impress upon your souls that you are to carry this idea into religion, as well as into the matters of ordinary life. I hope you will not forget what I have tried to show you, how secular success, health, reputation, rise, riches, and everything else that contributes to our "making the best of this world," are regulated by settled laws; and that, therefore, whatever may be the number of apparent exceptions, the general course of things is such, that one thing being done another follows, and that hence, in respect to what a man *may* do, or *will* do, in life, calculations can be made, and even prophecies uttered, with considerable confidence. Many, however, think that it is altogether different in religion. It is supposed that spiritual blessings

are dispensed to individuals on principles far less uniform and calculable than temporal ones; and that, whatever may be the connexion between means and ends in the affairs of life, because of the settled laws that govern them, it is altogether different in religious concerns, because *there* "we are not under law, but under grace."

I confess I want you young men to understand, and I want you to make it the principle of your religious conduct, that the teaching of the Gospel is, that Grace has *become* law. You have to act, therefore, I believe, in spiritual things, on precisely the same principle which is to regulate your conduct in the affairs of life. Natural law, in its three systems, physical, social, and spiritual, being what we have described, and, as law, working out its inevitable results, God interposes for our relief,—but, not by caprice, partiality, kindnesses towards individuals, separate acts and interpositions in the case of one and another, the exercise of mere prerogative, all of which throw us, in religion, either upon the endless multiplication of miracles, or on chances and peradventures, which can afford no rational ground for action or hope. Instead of this, the grand, general idea of the Gospel is, *the establishment of a gracious dispensation*, or system, intermingling with or overshadowing the natural,—itself becoming as fixed and settled a thing as either of them, prepared to act according to its own nature, and to work out effects by the action of determined laws and arrangements.

It is a supernatural system, introduced and established by a Divine act, connected with all previously established laws, intended to supply to man what it was not originally in *them* to evolve;—that is to say, by some mysterious harmony with their primary rules, and in consistency with the maintenance of their integrity, to make it possible for their transgressors and violators to escape or evade the natural and deserved consequences of their conduct. This system of mediation and grace was established, and came into action for man, from the time of the entrance of sin. It centres in Christ. He was "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." The Divine act of establishing the system of mercy in Him, and then gradually unfolding it and revealing it to the Church, is the one thing to be regarded by us as including in it the miraculous element. Once established, things proceed according to the laws and canons of the economy. The supernatural ceases. The separate items, which make up the active working of the system, are not so many individual miracles, though the system originates and is introduced by miracle. The creation of the world was a direct interference with the course of things which previously existed; but, when completed, everything that was thus marvellously introduced proceeds and acts by appropriate law. The "new creation," the interposition of "a Mediator," in whom grace was given us from the foundation of the world,—this was God's great supernatural act, miraculous according to the pre-

vious constitution of things, but, once established, proceeding according to settled arrangements, not by a series of miraculous acts. Now, I believe you ought to proceed in religious matters on this understanding. You have every one of you, as I interpret things, as real a connexion with the supernatural system of grace, as you have with the natural systems of physical, social, and spiritual law; and you will find this out one day, whatever you may think now, when you will be judged on the principle of having been under it, and addressed by it, and offered salvation through it. You will then understand how God says all this in perfect sincerity, in good faith, in right earnest, and in the plain common-sense meaning of the words. He acts in the dispensation of grace, as He does in those of nature. You have not to wait for anything to be done beyond what is already done; you are not to suppose that there is any necessity for God to do something else; you are not to imagine that if God intends to save you, or wishes you to be saved, He will somehow do it,—that the time will come,—and that, till then, you can do nothing. All this is to remove the miraculous element of the Gospel from "the redemption of the world by Jesus Christ," to the act which saves each individual soul. As to God's intentions, will, time, and so on, these are to be learnt from what He has done, and by what He says. "He loved *the world,* and gave his only begotten Son, that *whosoever* believeth in Him

should not perish, but have everlasting life." He "*would have all men to be saved* by coming to the knowledge of the truth." "*Now* is the accepted time, behold now is the day of salvation." It is your duty to believe in Christ, to trust in God, to pray, to repent, to hope, to "yield yourselves" to the force of inward suggestions, to beware lest you "do despite to the Spirit of grace." You ought to live and move and have your being in the atmosphere of that gracious dispensation which God has set up, and which envelops you, and is made for you, with all its settled and blessed appliances. Heartily believe this. Act upon it. Because of it, repentance, prayer, faith,—Divine aid, pardon, heaven,—are all respectively possible or efficacious, or attainable here or hereafter. Fall in, then, with the arrangements of grace and mercy which, through Christ, surround and press upon you on all sides, just as other laws do by nature. Begin at once. "Fear God from your youth." "Take heed to your ways, according to His testimonies," that they may be "kept clean." It is best for all duty to begin with life; for a man, in everything, to have as little as possible to undo, to regret, to forsake, or to be forgiven. Don't leave anything to possibilities and perhapses,—to chance or accident. Don't fear but that you may act in religious matters with the same freedom and confidence that you do in others. Don't procrastinate, from the idea that something extraordinary is to happen, to charm you into religion, or to be a

warrant for your faith. "All things are ready." God "waits to be gracious." He has revealed to you how everything is arranged and ordered to secure to you a happy religious life, if you will only give yourselves early to His service; and how the best preparation for "honour, and immortality, and eternal life," is to "walk with Him" *all through this,* in painstaking and "patient continuance in well doing." Believe this. Act upon it from this moment. Trust nothing to future happy accidents either for this life or the next. Depend upon it, it is as true of the one as it is of the other, that "THE CHAPTER OF ACCIDENTS IS THE BIBLE OF THE FOOL."

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